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SO DEBATE
Genre, structure and poetics in the Byzantine vernacular romances of love

PANAGIOTIS A. AGAPITOS[1]

This debate focuses on a group of anonymous Byzantine romances written in fifteen-syllable verse and in the vernacular idiom sometime between the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries. The point of departure is a report written by Panagiotis Agapitos of the University of Cyprus. After a critical look at earlier research on this neglected genre, he presents the principal texts and other related textual material. The three main sections of the report are devoted to genre, structure and poetics, while the conclusion summarizes the report's main propositions.We have asked a number of international experts in the field to comment on these propositions, and Professor Agapitos to reply to their comments. A common bibliographical list concludes the debate. Further comments from other scholars are invited.

REPORT

To the memory of Hans-Georg Beck
Was wir tun, wird nie verstanden,
sondern immer nur gelobt und getadelt.
Friedrich Nietzsche

It is a tacitly assumed but deeply ingrained conviction among most Byzantinists and Neohellenists that Byzantine literature is divided into two distinct parts, texts in the so-called "learned" idiom (*Hochsprache*) and texts in the so-called "vernacular" idiom (*Volkssprache*). This distinction is even physically reflected in the separate volumes alloted to these two parts in section XII (*Byzantinisches Handbuch*) of the monumental *Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft* (Hunger 1978 and Beck 1971a, respectively).

Consequently, Byzantinists are on the whole content to concentrate on the

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great mass of learned texts, leaving the far smaller amount of vernacular texts to be studied primarily by Neohellenists as Early Modern Greek literature.[2] In this way, a historically absurd situation has been created where, at the same time and even at the same place, two literatures lead two separate lives.[3] But when it comes to vernacular literature, most Neohellenists today concentrate (with the major exception of the "epic" *Digenis Akritis*, to which I shall return) on texts from the fifteenth century onwards. Thus, Byzantine vernacular production—in other words, texts written within or around the broader social, economic, cultural and ideological framework of Komnenian and Palaiologan Byzantium, and with no indication that their authors consciously distanced themselves from this framework—has been left to hover in a phantastic twilight zone to which the paradoxical name of *Neograeca Medii Aevi* was given.[4]

When, therefore, in 1998 *Symbolae Osloenses* hosted a debate on "*Quellenforschung* and/or literary criticism: narrative structures in Byzantine historical writings" led by Jakov Ljubarskij, the report concentrated on historiography (the genre repeatedly perceived since the sixteenth century as the most impressive literary achievement of Byzantine culture), while the comments brought into the discussion other genres of learned literature, such as hagiography in its broadest sense, rhetoric and epistolography. With two brief exceptions (Ljubarskij 1998, 28 and 37), vernacular literature was omitted from the debate. Moreover, the report and some of the comments took an apologetic stance as to the literary interpretation of Medieval Greek texts. This mild form of an inferiority complex has haunted students of Byzantine letters since the Age of Enlightenment and has its roots in that era's attitudes to art and the creative genius (Agapitos 1992a, 233–244).

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[2] One should note, for example, the perfunctory reference to vernacular literature in various books offering an interpretative synthesis of Byzantine culture or its omission from anthologies of Byzantine literature. As I painfully noticed, vernacular literature was also absent from the Twentieth International Congress of Byzantine Studies (Paris, 2001).

[3] For example, in the acts of an impressive symposium on "Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204" (Maguire 1997), vernacular literature is completely absent, although (a) the four satirical poems of *Ptochoprodromos* are addressed to Emperors John and Manuel Komnenos, and (b) the authorship of Theodoros Prodromos for these poems is now certain. This, of course, is a projection on Byzantine culture of the distinction between Medieval Latin literature and the various Western vernacular literatures, a highly problematic distinction in itself, that was, however, used to construct the history of nineteenth-century European national literatures; on these false divisions in the case of Byzantine literature and Medieval Greek language, see Smith 1996a, Hinterberger 2001, Hinterberger 2002, Cupane 2003.

[4] On the occasion of a colloquium organized by Hans Eideneier (1987), initiating a series of further colloquia (Panayotakis 1993, Egea-Alonso 1996, Agapitos-Pieris 2002).

This year's *SO Debate* focuses on a group of anonymous Byzantine romances written in fifteen-syllable verse and in the vernacular idiom sometime between the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries. Expressions of apology concerning a literary interpetation of Byzantine texts are not to be offered. Personally, I consider them irrelevant to the tasks of philology, once any romantic notion about aesthetic *evaluation* of art has been discarded. As has been eloquently argued in a recent essay (Gumbrecht 2003), philology, in approaching the textual manifestations of a past culture, should always be conscious of its three main tasks: edition, commentary and interpretation. They constitute interrelated parts of a hermeneutic entity, even though individual scholars might decide to devote their energies to different aspects of this entity. If philologists need to apologize for any approach they choose leading to their objects of study, then the fault lies with the philologists, not with the texts.

This having been said, the report will discuss in an introductory section certain aspects of *Wissenschaftsgeschichte*; in a second section it will present the texts under consideration, as well as other related textual material. Three further sections are devoted to genre, structure and poetics respectively, while a concluding section summarizes the report's main propositions.

I. "*Von der Liebe zu den Byzantinern*"

Although the Byzantine vernacular romances (a wholly conventional term with no historical value) were already used as material for the linguistic study of Medieval Greek in the sixteenth and seventeeth centuries (Crusius 1584, Ducange 1688), it is to the Hellenist Dimitrios Mavrophrydis (1828–1866) and to the Romanist Charles Gidel (1827–1900) respectively that we owe the first comprehensive edition and the first formal study of some of these texts (Mavrophrydis 1866, Gidel 1866). Both scholars viewed these vernacular poems as belonging to Modern Greek literature. This perspective, in tune with ideas developed by other scholars around the middle of the nineteenth century, established three basic premises: (i) the romances reflect the influence of Western chivalric story-telling on the Greeks; (ii) vernacular poetry is a creation of the "people" and reflects a popular (*qua* Modern Greek) culture, forming a clear break from learned Byzantine literature; (iii) because of this break, these "folk" poems are to a certain extent *original*, as opposed to the *imitative* products for and by the elite (Agapitos 1991, 3–10; Agapitos 1992a, 244–251). In one way or another, these three premises lie behind all subsequent study of these texts.

Despite two early, but nowadays utterly forgotten, efforts by Charles Diehl (1859–1944) and John Bury (1861–1927) at a more sensible approach to the

vernacular romances (Diehl 1906, Bury 1911),[5] substantial credit for a more synthetic view and a deeper literary understanding of the matter in recent years must be given to Hans-Georg Beck (1910–1999). He was the last great visionary of Byzantine Studies in the second half of the twentieth century, who, moreover, publicly formulated this vision—at once profoundly romantic and ironically pragmatic—in one of the most intelligent essays on the aims and future of the field (Beck 1977). In May 2004, five years will have passed since Beck's death and it is quite appropriate that a debate on the Byzantine vernacular romances of love should be dedicated to his memory, although Beck himself kept a discreet distance from honours and distinctions. He even went so far as to write a tenderly bitter essay on the occasion of his eightieth birthday, bidding farewell to Byzantium, but much more so to Byzantine Studies (Beck 1990).[6]

In contrast to the tacit practice already mentioned, but very much in keeping with the Munich tradition initiated by Karl Krumbacher, Hans-Georg Beck studied closely both learned and vernacular Medieval Greek literature ranging from the fourth to the fifteenth centuries.[7] Already in the late fifties, while discussing the transmission of Byzantine literature, he devoted a special section to vernacular literature (Beck 1961, 470–493), pointing to the difficulties involved in studying the manuscripts of these texts and their, in his view, peculiarly small sizes. Some years later, both in his *Geschichte der byzantinischen Volksliteratur* (Beck 1971a), as well as in three other studies (Beck 1971b, 48–49; Beck 1974a; Beck 1974b, 31–32), he suggested that vernacular writing in the twelfth century seemed to have developed from "above" rather than from "below", in other words, that it had been created by the same authors who also wrote in the learned idiom. He also suggested that during the Palaiologan period, even if initially vernacular texts came from "above", they moved away from conventional learned practices, a move that he referred to as "Abschied von der Philologie" (Beck 1986b, 173). Beck was the first Byzantinist to make a more serious effort to

[5] It could not have been a coincidence that the two scholars were historians rather than philologists.

[6] For broad overviews of his life and work, see the informative obituaries by Prinzing 1999, Schreiner 1999 and Koder 1999–2000; for a more sensitive appraisal of Beck's personality as a scholar, writer and thinker, see the excellent *Nachruf* by Kresten 2001. A complete and well-organized bibliography of Beck's scholarly work has been compiled by Prinzing-Hoffmann 2000.

[7] For example, he included vernacular poetry in the chapter devoted to literature in his study on Byzantine culture (Beck 1978a, 107–162), as well as an ample selection of texts in his excellent thematic anthology of Byzantine literature (Beck 1982).

define the public of vernacular literature (Beck 1975); furthermore, he proposed that the Western elements to be found in these romances (e.g. tournaments, hawk-hunting, costume, the presence of Latins and/or Franks), were nothing but conventions culled from the Constantinopolitan courtly fashions of the twelfth century (Beck 1971b, 125–126; Beck 1978b, 125–126).

One of Beck's main concerns in his later years was the relation of eroticism and orthodoxy in Byzantium, devoting some thoughts on eroticism in the romances (Beck 1978b, 119–124; Beck 1984, xxxvii–xxxviii; Beck 1986a, 24–32; Beck 1986b, 160–200). He suggested that, despite a negative attitude of the Church to erotic literature, the Byzantines did read such texts, especially the romances, hiding them between theological treatises in small manuscripts or justifying them through thinly disguised allegorical interpretation. In comparing the romances to famous Medieval German narrative poems of religious quest (Gottfried's *Tristan*, Wolfram's *Parzival* and Hartmann's *Gregorius*), Beck felt that the Byzantines never achieved that tragic understanding of Love and Redemption, so characteristic, in his view, of the Western Middle Ages. However, he did concede to the Byzantine poets a feeble attempt at innovation in their effort to move away from the abstract *ideas* of philology and closer to the social *realities* of everyday life. This notional opposition, most clearly expressed in the title *Ideen und Realitäten* he gave to his collected papers (Beck 1972), formed for Beck the core to any proper appreciation of Byzantine culture; it was an approach motivated by his "Liebe zu den Byzantinern" (Beck 1983), and for which he thought he had been unjustly accused as an "illoyaler Entmythologisierer" (Beck 1990, 11).

Three points of criticism can be raised against some of Beck's propositions; they bear some relevance to the present report. The first point concerns the transmission of the vernacular romances. Beck did not actually involve himself with editions proper or codicological studies of the surviving manuscripts; his ideas about the small size of the codices and their overall make-up are not born out by the manuscripts themselves (Agapitos-Smith 1994; Agapitos 1998a, 125–127). The second point concerns the presence of Western elements in the romances; even if these elements belonged to twelfth-century fashions, Beck did not explain the *reason* for and the *function* of their prominent appearance in the Palaiologan poems (Cupane 1973–1974, Cupane 1978, Cupane 1986, Agapitos 1993b). Finally, the third point involves his understanding of Love as a metaphysical concept; it is a romantic notion—closer to Wagner's *Tristan* and *Parsifal*—inappropriately used in the case of the Byzantine romances and in a problematic comparison with the wrong Western texts (Cupane 1987, Cupane 1992).

Despite this criticism, Beck's studies retain their value because they pointed

to major problems in the study of the vernacular romances within Byzantine culture and because, more specifically, they generated a fruitful dialogue in challenging younger scholars to examine his propositions more carefully and to suggest new solutions along the lines of his inqury. Beck's sagacity, sensitivity, imagination and literary style lend to his scholarly work that particular warmth of artistic inspiration which is the mark of a true thinker, often praised or blamed but rarely understood.

II. *The texts*

Let us move on to the texts I have been referring to as Byzantine vernacular romances. How many are they and which exactly? The seemingly simple question proves more difficult to answer than one would have expected by reading through the relevant sections in Karl Krumbacher's *Geschichte der byzantinischen Litteratur*. He divided the vernacular narrative material in three thematic units: "Sagenhafte und historische Dichtung auf nationaler Grundlage"; "Romantische Dichtungen über antike Stoffe"; "Romantische Dichtung über mittelalterliche, zum Teil abendländische Stoffe" (Krumbacher 1897, 824–843, 844–853, 854–872, respectively). Despite certain internal rearrangements, this tripartite division was retained by subsequent handbooks and overviews (e.g. Beck 1971a, Beaton 1996). Taxonomy, obviously, is a vexing issue for any history of literature, and Byzantine literature is not exempt from it (Odorico-Agapitos 2002). The vernacular narrative poems are a case in point. They are very much products of a medieval culture and do not fit into any canonical genre of antiquity. As a result, they float around under the general heading "romance of chivalry".

For the present report I have chosen eight narrative poems—two of them were unknown to Krumbacher and Beck—that, in my opinion, form one generic category with two subdivisions; the eight texts focus specifically, though in different ways, on the love story of a protagonist couple. The chronological placement of the texts has caused great dispute and cannot be considered settled;[8] the chronology and sequence proposed here differs substantially from the ones found in previous handbooks and overviews:[9]

[8] On the matter, see the diverging opinions of Agapitos 1993b; Michailidis 1993; Manoussacas 1994; Cupane 1995c, 27; Beaton 1996, 219–220.

[9] For practical purposes I include here a list of current editions and translations of the eight texts, together with some bibliographical items pertaining to issues of textual criticism; Cupane 1995c offers complete lists of such items up to 1994. An asterisk indicates the edition used in the report.

Livistros and Rhodamne (= *L&R*), middle of the thirteenth century;[10]
Velthandros and Chrysantza (= *V&C*), late thirteenth century;[11]
Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe (= *K&C*), second quarter of the fourteenth century;[12]
The Tale of Achilles or *Achilleid* (= *Ach*), middle of the fourteenth century;[13]
Florios and Platziaflore (= *F&P*), second half of the fourteenth century;[14]
The Tale of Troy or *Byzantine Iliad* (= *ByzIl*), late fourteenth to early fifteenth century;[15]
Alexander and Semiramis (= *A&S*), first half of the fifteenth century;[16]
Imperios and Margarona (= *I&M*), middle of the fifteenth century.[17]

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[10] *Agapitos 2004d (edition of redaction **α** = versions **S N P**); *Lambert 1935, 52–320 (edition of redaction **E**); *Lendari 1994 (edition of redaction **V**); Betts 1995, 95–192 (English translation of versions **N** and **S**, as edited by Lambert 1935, 53–321). For the manuscripts, editions and editorial problems of the romance, see Agapitos 1992b, Agapitos 1993a, Lendari 1993, Agapitos 1996a, Agapitos 2004d.

[11] Kriaras 1955, 101–130 (older edition); Betts 1995, 5–32 (English translation); *Cupane 1995c, 227–305 (revised version of Kriaras 1955, with Italian translation); Egea 1998 (most recent, but somewhat idiosyncratic, edition with Spanish translation).

[12] Kriaras 1955, 29–83 (older edition); Pichard 1956 (most recent edition, with French translation); Betts 1995, 37–90 (English translation); *Cupane 1995c, 58–213 (revised version of Pichard 1956, with Italian translation).

[13] Hesseling 1919 (older edition of redactions **N** and **L**); Smith 1990 (latest edition of redaction **O**); Cupane 1995c, 324–442 (revised version of Hesseling 1919 for **N**, with Italian translation); *Smith 1999, 13–74 (latest edition of redaction **N**); *Smith 1999, 155–176 (revised version of Smith 1990 without critical apparatus).

[14] Hesseling 1917 (edition of redaction **L**); Kriaras 1955, 141–196 (problematic "mixed" edition of redactions **V** and **L**); *Cupane 1995c, 464–565 (revised version of Hesseling 1917, with Italian translation); Ortolá Salas 1998 (latest "mixed" edition with Spanish translation and commentary). On the romance's textual history and a proposal for a parallel edition of its redactions, see now di Benedetto Zimbone 2000.

[15] *Nørgard-Smith 1977 (*editio princeps*); Lavagnini 1988 (Italian translation). On the textual problems of this romance, see also Moennig 1998.

[16] *Moennig 2004 (edition of versions **B** and **S**, with German translation of version **B**); see also Moennig 2002.

[17] Wagner 1874 (edition of redaction **V**); Lambros 1880, 239–288 (edition of redaction **O**); Kriaras 1955, 215–249 (absolutely useless "mixed" edition of redactions **N V O** and frgs. **G H**); on the textual history and editorial problems of the romance, see Jeffreys-Jeffreys 1971. For the report I will use Wagner's edition of redaction **V**, but fully revised on the basis of the manuscript; I will also quote from the unedited redaction **N** with reference to the respective folio numeration.

V&C, K&C and *ByzIl* survive each of them in only one manuscript; the other five works have come down to us in various larger-scale redactions (e.g. *L&R* and *Ach* in three) or smaller-scale versions (e.g. *A&S* in two), a situation quite typical for most of vernacular literature, and a point to which I shall return.

Three other vernacular narrative texts will be excluded from my analysis; these are: the two Byzantine redactions **E** and **G** of the *Digenis Akritis*, an epic-like story with certain romance elements, probably dating from the twelfth century, and where the love story plays a secondary role;[18] *The War of Troy*, a vast fourteenth-century adaptation of the equally vast twelfth-century romance of Benoît de St. Maure, where no erotic material proper is included (Papathomopoulos-Jeffreys 1997); *The Marriage of Theseus and Aemilia*, a late fifteenth-century translation of Boccaccio's *Teseida*, barely connected to Byzantine tradition and probably catering to a Greek audience in Italy.[19]

However, two allegorical poems of the fourteenth century will be brought into the discussion, because they shed some light on perceptions of genre and poetics in Byzantium and on the problematic separation of vernacular from learned literature; the two texts are: the anonymous *Consolatory Fable about Bad and Good Fortune* in the vernacular idiom, a short narrative poem where a Stranger (Ξένος) seeks out the castle of Good Fortune in order to have his bad fortune changed;[20] Meliteniotes' *Verses on Chastity* in the learned idiom, where the young poet in the *persona* of a Stranger meets Chastity and is taken by her to see her wondrous castle.[21]

There are a number of reasons for focusing presently on the vernacular

[18] The *Digenis Akritis* is unquestionably the most studied of all vernacular narrative texts, primarily because of its "epic-heroic" character which catered to the needs of philologists and folklorists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to create a "national epic of the Byzantines" (the phrase belongs to the eminent folklorist Nikolaos Politis), equivalent to the *El cantar de mio Cid* and the *Chanson de Roland*; recent edition of **E** and **G** with English translation by *Jeffreys 1998 (with full bibliography), Italian translation of **G** with introduction and notes by Odorico 1995, French translation of **E** with introduction and notes by Odorico 2003. For a series of interpretative approaches to the *Digenis* and its various Byzantine and Modern Greek versions see Beaton-Ricks 1993.

[19] The text is only partially edited (Olsen 1990); it is one of the very few vernacular narrative poems that were printed as a chapbook in Venice in the early sixteenth century (Kaklamanis 1997).

[20] Lambros 1880, 289–311 (edition of redaction **O**); Lambros 1906 (edition of redaction **L**); *Cupane 1995c, 635–691 (fully revised version of Lambros 1906, with Italian translation).

[21] *Miller 1858 (the only available edition); for the textual problems of the poem and all previous bibliography see Schönauer 1996; for an annotated English translation of vv. 758–827 and 2335–2524, see Dolezal-Mavroudi 2002, 151–158. Miller's edition is full of misreadings and silent corrections; I have therefore collated the manuscript afresh for all passages quoted.

romances, rather than on the whole of erotic fiction in Byzantium:

(i) Even if the total number of the redactions and versions of the eight romances is small in comparison with their French or Italian counterparts, it still allows for broader interpretative approaches. There are, of course, some excellent papers concerning individual topics in the romances and larger studies focusing on specific issues (bibliographies in Beck 1971a, 115–153; Beaton 1996, 270–293); yet no single synthetic monograph has been devoted to any one of these narrative poems or a volume of collected studies to the eight texts as a whole.

(ii) Once the false dichotomy between the "two" Byzantine literatures has been abandoned, broader and more detailed comparisons can be conducted with the remaining of vernacular and learned texts in the Palaiologan period, as well as with the erotic novels of the Komnenian era.[22]

(iii) The vernacular romances open up various possibilities for fruitful comparative approaches with Western and Eastern Medieval narrative.

(iv) Such interpretative approaches would further the interest in new and sound critical editions that are not available for approximately half of the material. This absence of critical editions is due not only to the lack of detailed palaeographic-codicological studies, metrical analyses and linguistic studies, but also to the fluidity of the texts themselves and the difficulty in finding methods appropriate to a historically correct textual criticism (Agapitos 2001).[23]

(v) A renewed editorial interest in these poems would also lead to the production of more translations with introductions and notes,[24] something absolutely necessary if the Byzantine vernacular romances are to find readers among Medievalists, Orientalists and Comparatists who have no knowledge of Medieval Greek.

(vi) A closer study of the romances, if conducted on the broadest possible basis, would further our understanding of the socio-cultural milieu in which these texts were first produced and the changing conditions in their subsequent reception.

(vii) Lastly, in the past fifteen years the Komnenian novels have received

[22] A point of clarification: I use the terms novel and romance in order to distinguish the twelfth-century texts, feigning a "bourgeois antique" setting, from the later poems which are placed in a "contemporary aristocratic" environment.

[23] The widely diverging opinions on editorial method in Eideneier 1987, Eideneier-Moennig-Toufexis 2001 and Agapitos-Pieris 2002, 245–275 are quite instructive in this respective.

[24] For example, owing to the problematic editorial situation of the romances, Cupane 1995c saw herself forced to revise all editions she used and to omit *L&R* and *I&M* from her selection.

substantial attention through new critical editions, translations in various European languages and numerous interpretative studies (critical overview in Agapitos 2000b), whereas, as already indicated, this is not the case with the Palaiologan romances.

III. *The wisdom of genre*

Genre studies have not been a favourite among Byzantinists, as the negative remarks of Krumbacher (1897, 640–641, 706–707) on the genres of poetry or of Beck (1971a, 14) on vernacular literature reveal. The reason lies in the assumption that there exist no Byzantine genres but rather ancient genres continuing their existence for some thousand years (Hunger 1978, I, v–vii). Consequently, the appearance of manifestly different textual types has been often explained through a creative influence from "outside" (the early Byzantine *kontakion* from Syriac hymnography, the Palaiologan vernacular romances from Western chivalric narrative) or a creative synthesis achieved "before" (hagiography as a genre of Roman Imperial Antiquity). In the few instances where a genre has been studied (e.g. funeral orations), the main purpose is to collect and to classify the material in a purely taxonomic fashion *sub specie antiquitatis* and, then, to detect the common elements of this genre and its endless variations. Obviously, such an approach suffers from an abundance of aesthetic prejudice and a lack of historical method (Mullett 1992, Agapitos 2002, Constantinou 2004).

Literary theory has long ago shown us that the "pure" form of a supposed genre is the result of a theoretical abstraction which assumes canonical authority in a specific historical context (Todorov 1978, 44–60; Strelka 1978, 146–165; Fowler 1982, 37–53). Yet "pure" forms of a genre (like the abstract structure of a tragedy constructed in the *Poetics*) or canonical model-texts (like the Sophoclean *Oidipous the King* chosen by Aristotle) play an important part in the formation of generic categories because they become points of reference, departure or return. Positivist scholarship accepted the "pure" form and its canonical model-texts at face value, thus viewing the history of a genre as a degenerating development of additive variation within an immutable generic frame. In fact, generic development should be viewed rather as an attempt to redefine each time anew the constructed canon by entering in an antagonistic dialogue with it (Bloom 1975). The most extreme form of such a dialogue is deviation. Deviation may alter the form of the model-text, change its content or cancel the canon altogether.

I have argued elsewhere that these remarks on canon and deviation are applicable to funerary literature of the Middle Byzantine period (Agapitos

2003). They are certainly valid for the Komnenian novels, so blatant and tasteless an imitation of their ancient predecessors according to the traditional view, but quite deviant, artful and decidedly subversive texts in the light of recent scholarship (Agapitos-Reinsch 2000; Nilsson 2001). However, are these remarks applicable to the Palaiologan romances, where no canon and no model-texts exist? Was this not the prime reason for considering them original, in that they seem to have materialized out of nowhere? Furthermore, do the Komnenian novels and the Palaiologan romances belong to the same genre and, if so, what genre would this be?

The few attempts that have been made to sketch out a generic frame-work for the vernacular romances use a variety of criteria. Aleksidze (1982, 97–98) suggested a distinction in wonder-tale, chivalric romance and epic. Kechagioglou (1982, 269–271) pointed to a detailed categorization based on content: chivalric-erotic (*K&C, V&C, L&R, F&P, I&M*), heroic-erotic (*Ach*, as well as *DigAkr*), mythological (*ByzIl*), allegorical (*LogPar*). Beaton (1996, 101–109, 135–145), based on Beck 1971a, proposed a division between "original" romances, where no Western model has been detected (*Ach, K&C, V&C, L&R, ByzIl*), and "adapted" romances, where a Western model exists (*I&M, F&P*, as well as *PolTr* and *Teseid*), a division followed by myself (Agapitos 1991) and Cupane (1996). However, in her volume of translations, Cupane (1995c) included texts from all three of Krumbacher's thematic units. In the most detailed discussion of the issue so far, Moennig (1999) proposed a distinction in two groups based on non-historical and historical subjects; applying the terminology of Michail Bakhtin, he defined the first group as narratives taking place in "adventure time", where the *physical life* of the protagonists is left untouched (*K&C, V&C, L&R, A&S, F&P, I&M*), and the second group as narratives taking place in "biographical time", where the *essence* of the protagonists is left untouched (*Ach, ByzIl*, as well as *DigAkr* and recension ζ* of the *Alexander Romance*). Although all of these proposals are surely interesting and even valid, they are based on modern concepts about content and originality that are external to the textuality of the medieval poems. Only Moennig uses a structural aspect (the male protagonist's "biography") as part of his argumentation and this marks, in my opinion, a breakthrough.

Let me start by reminding the reader that it was Photios in the ninth century who—rightly or wrongly is not the issue here—put together under the term δραματικόν four narrative texts (Heliodorus, Achilles Tatius, Iamblichus, Antonius Diogenes) and, thus, created the genre of the "novel". This is of no small consequence for the reception of a specific type of "love story" (Hellenic setting, exotic places, gods and pagan rituals, bandits, chastity, rival lovers, unexpected reversals of fortune, happy ending) as a

compact generic category by critics and authors in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, attested in Michael Psellos' essay on Heliodorus/Tatius and the four Komnenian novelists (Agapitos 1998a, Agapitos 2004b). To a certain extent, the problem of defining a generic category for the Palaiologan romances lies in the absence of critical pronouncements similar to Photios and Psellos about what these vernacular narrative poems are as texts. However, there exist three fourteenth-century testimonies, external to the romances, that allow us a glance into the perception of Byzantine readers about the genre of these narratives.

Manuel Philes (ca. 1275 – ca. 1345), in a lengthy poem headed Ἐπίγραμμα εἰς ἐρωτικὸν βιβλίον τοῦ ἐξαδέλφου τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος, discusses a narrative work (it remains unclear if in verse or prose) written by the prince Andronikos Palaiologos, cousin of Emperor Andronikos II (1282–1328). The plot of this "erotic book" resembles fairly closely the vernacular romance *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* (text and analysis in Knös 1962). Philes, in talking about the correct way to read the prince's work, describes two types of readers (*Epigr.* 14–31); the one, careful and diligent, puts effort in understanding the higher (*qua* allegorical) meaning of the story, while the other, careless and slothful, reacts only spontaneously to its erotic content. The term ἐρωτικὸν βιβλίον in the poem's heading echoes the similar terms used by Photios (ἐρωτικῶν δραμάτων ὑπόθεσις) and Psellos (ἐρωτικὸν σύγγραμμα, ἐρωτικὸν βιβλίον). In the poem itself, Philes grudgingly aknowledges the primacy of the erotic story;[25] he describes the narrative character of the text with the term μῦθος, stressing the nuptial happy end and the chaste aspect of the story,[26] two elements far removed from the sensuous eroticism of *K&C* (Agapitos 1990). Irrespective of the proposed allegorical interpretation, Philes defines the narrative work of prince Andronikos as a "love story" with the help of an archaizing terminology derived from Byzantine philological criticism.

Redaction **L** of the *Consolatory Fable about Bad and Good Fortune* (Λόγος παρηγορητικὸς περὶ Δυστυχίας καὶ Εὐτυχίας) includes a verse colophon written by the same scribe and in the same calligraphic style as the main text. The manuscript of this redaction can be dated with certainty to 1350–1370. It has been assumed until now that the colophon was composed by the scribe. However, an exact palaeographic analysis of the manuscript shows that the

[25] *Epigr.* 16–17: πρὸς γὰρ τὰ καλὰ προτροπήν σοι δεικνύει | κἂν ἐμφάσεις ἔρωτος ἡ βίβλος φέρει ("for the book presents to you an incitement to virtue, even if it bears an emphasis on love").

[26] *Epigr.* 4: τὸν εὐγενῆ κυκλοῦσι τοῦ μύθου γάμον; 19: μῦθος πονηθεὶς εὐφυῶς καὶ σωφρόνως.

scribe faithfully copied the colophon from his exemplar (**λ**) including errors which the scribe as the author could not have made (Agapitos 2004d, ch. V.1.1 and pl. 19). Thus, redaction **L** must be dated at least twenty years earlier (ca. 1330–1350) in order to allow for the archetypus and the immediate exemplar **λ** of **L** to have been copied. The colophon, which presents a number of textual problems, runs as follows (*LogPar* **L** 748–756):[27]

> ᾽Ανεγνωρίστου κρεμασμοῦ μυθογραφὴ καὶ λόγος,
> κρυφῆς ἀγάπης συμπλοκὴ ὡς ἀπὸ ξενοτρόπου·
> ὁ συγγραφεὺς ἀλλότριος, ξενακουστὸν τὸ πρᾶγμαν,
> λογοκινεῖ τῷ πλάσματι, ὅλος ὁ μῦθος ξένος.
> ῎Εγραψα, οὐκ ἐξαίρετον ὑπέγραψα τὸν μῦθον·
> πλὴν γὰρ ἀνεπιτήδευτος πόθου, δίχως φουδούλαν,
> ὅλος ὁ μῦθος ἔρωτος καὶ ἀνερωτολήπτου.
> Καὶ ἐτελέσθη τολοιπόν, ὁ λόγος συνεγράφη,
> καὶ πᾶς ὁ ταύτην τὴν γραφὴν εὑρίσκει, ἂς ἀναγνώθῃ.
>
> This is a story and a fable-like writing about an unknown yearning,
> a plot about a hidden love, as if by someone of strange ways;
> the author is peculiar, the thing is completely unheard of,
> he narrates by means of figments, the whole fable is strange.
> I have copied, but I have not subscribed to the fable as outstanding;
> for it is indeed lacking in desire, it is without a beautiful girl,
> the whole fable is about love without love.
> So then, it is completed, the story has been written,
> and everyone who finds this writing, let him read it!

This comment reveals that the expectations of scribe **λ** as to the generic category of the poem have been thwarted, because the "peculiar author" used the typology of the "fable about love" but did not include a real love story, since the narrative lacks the "girl" (Cupane 1993, 436–437; Cupane 1995a, 165–166). With full rhetorical emphasis, the educated scribe refuses to consider this "fable" (μῦθος) as "outstanding" (ἐξαίρετος), an attribute of some significance, as we shall see presently. The use of the term *mythos* reminds us of Philes' poem. However, the term φουδούλα ("beautiful girl", *sc.* of aristocratic standing) introduces a new concept; as a potential technical term, unknown to Byzantine philological criticism, it characterizes the heroine of an erotic narrative. Interestingly enough, *foudoula* appears massively in *Le&R*

[27] See Cupane 1995c, 690–691 for the text with the older corrections and her notes on the difficult passage. I have made some further emendations of my own; needless to say, the translation is tentative.

α and to a lesser degree in *F&P*, but not in the other romances. I have demonstrated elsewhere (Agapitos 2004d, ch. V.1.2.1) that *LogPar* **L** uses in a most extended manner redaction **α** of *L&R*; and since *F&P* was written after *LogPar*, there can be little doubt as to the "fable about love" scribe **λ** had in mind.

The long and complex allegorical poem *On Chastity* is preserved in only one manuscript. Its lengthy heading, written in red ink, runs as follows:

> Στίχοι τοῦ Μελιτηνιώτου εἰς τὴν Σωφροσύνην· ἔχουσι δὲ καί τινα ἐρωτικά, ἀλλὰ καί τινα διηγήματα κατὰ ἀναγωγὴν νοούμενα, ὧν ἡ ἀλληγορία ἐπιτροχάδην ἐλέχθη{ν}· ἀρχὴ τῆς διηγήσεως.
>
> Verses of Meliteniotes on Chastity; furthermore, they contain some erotic narratives, but also some other narratives to be understood by spiritual enlightenment, of whom verses the allegorical meaning has been summarily mentioned [?].—Beginning of the narrative.

The author can be identified with the archdeacon and treasurer of the Patriarchate Theodoros Meliteniotes (ca. 1320–1393), who must have written the poem at the latest around the middle of the fourteenth century, when he was still in his younger years (Schönauer 1996, 8*–14*); the poem was partly intended as praise of a deceased relative of Meliteniotes, the nun Sophrosyne Mesopotamitissa († 27-2-1336). Besides the heading, where the poem's "erotic" content is already indicated, the text opens with the following "internal title" (*Sophr* 1–2):

> Ἐρωτικὴ διήγησις ἀλλὰ σωφρονεστάτη,
> μικρόν τι καθηδύνουσα τοὺς ἐραστὰς τῶν λόγων.
>
> This is a tale of love, yet absolutely chaste,
> delighting in small measure the lovers of artful discourse.

Before the poem has even begun, the author has pre-empted the reaction of his reader. *On Chastity* appears as a narrative text (*diegesis*) that uses the conventions of the "tale of love" (*erotike*); at the same time, it rejects love and opts for chastity (*sophronestate*), since a beautiful girl does appear, only she is not the *foudoula* of the romances, but the dead Sophrosyne, allegorically idealized as Chastity. What was for scribe **λ** of the *Consolatory Fable* an annoyingly negative trait of the short allegorical poem, is for Meliteniotes the central poetic artifice of his allegorical composition (Cupane 1978, 259). We should note that *erotike diegesis* obviously refers to an established and recognizable generic category.

It will be instructive to look now at the introductory headings, again

written in red ink, and at the prologues of the eight romances under consideration:

1a[28] Στίχοι πολὺ ἐρωτικοί, ἀφήγησις Λιβίστρου,
πῶς ὁ φίλος ὁ Κλιτοβὼν διηγεῖται τῆς Μυρτάνης (*L&R* **α** 1)
ἐρωτικὴ ἀφήγησις (*L&R* **α** 9)
ξενοχάραγον ἀφήγημαν ἀγάπης (*L&R* **α** 17)
Λοιπὸν καὶ τὴν ἀφήγησιν ἄρξομαι τῆς ἀγάπης
Λιβίστρου τοῦ πολυπαθοῦς καὶ κόρης τῆς Ροδάμνης
(*L&R* **α** 25–26)

1b ᾽Αφήγησις Λιβίστρου τοῦ πολυπαθῆ καὶ κόρης τῆς Ροδάμνης.
᾽Αρχὴ καὶ τέλος ἔμορφον πρὸς τὰ ἔπαθαν ἀλλήλων·
εἶχαν καὶ λύπην καὶ χαρὰν εἰς τὰ ἔπαθαν ἐντάμα (*L&R* **V** 1–3)

2 Διήγησις ἐξαίρετος Βελθάνδρου τοῦ Ρωμαίου (*V&C* tit.)
Θέλω σᾶς ἀφηγήσασθαι λόγους ὡραιοτάτους,
ὑπόθεσιν παράξενην, πολλὰ παρηλλαγμένην (*V&C* 2–3)

3 Τὸ κατὰ Καλλίμαχον καὶ Χρυσορρόην ἐρωτικὸν διήγημα (*K&C* tit.)
᾽Αρχόμεθα διήγησιν τινὸς πειραζομένου (*K&C* 2)
᾽Αρχὴ τῆς ὑποθέσεως λοιπὸν καὶ τῶν ἐνταῦθα (*K&C* 24)

4a[29] ᾽Αρχὴ τοῦ πανθαυμασιωτάτου καὶ μεγάλου ᾽Αχιλλέως (*Ach* **N** 1)
Καὶ τί νὰ εἰπῶ τὸν ῞Ερωταν, πῶς νὰ τὸν ὀνομάσω;
Καὶ πῶς νὰ γράψω τὰς ἀρχάς, τὴν δύναμιν τὴν ἔχει (*Ach* **N** 2–3)
ἅπαντες νῦν ἀκούσατε τὴν ἀφήγησιν τὴν ταύτην (*Ach* **N** 11)

4b Διήγησις περὶ τοῦ ᾽Αχιλλέως (*Ach* **O** tit.)

5[30] Διήγησις ἐξαίρετος, ἐρωτικὴ καὶ ξένη
Φλωρίου τοῦ πανευτυχοῦς καὶ κόρης Πλατσιαφλώρης (*F&P* **V** tit.)

6 Διήγησις γεναμένη ἐν Τροίᾳ ἅπας ὁ ἀφανισμὸς ἔνθε ἐγίνη.
᾽Αρχὴ τῆς Τρωάδος (*ByzIl* tit. a–b)
῞Αρξομαι διηγήματα, τὰ τῆς Τρωάδος πάθη,
ἄρξομαι διηγήσομαι τὰ γέγονεν εἰς Τροίαν (*ByzIl* 1–2)
ἄρχω νὰ διηγήσομαι τὰ ἔμπροσθεν τοῦ λόγου (*ByzIl* 19)

7 Διήγησις ᾽Αλεξάνδρου μετὰ Σεμίραμης βασιλίσσας
Συρίας περὶ τῶν ἕνδεκα ἐρωτημάτων (*A&S* **B** tit.)
῞Ακουσον πάλιν νὰ σὲ εἰπῶ λόγον περὶ ἀγάπης (*A&S* **B** 1)

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[28] *L&R* **E** lacks the title and the first thirty-four verses, because a folio has dropped from the manuscript (Lambert 1935, 17 and 24).

[29] *Ach* **L** lacks the title and the equivalent of *Ach* **N** 21–46 (i.e. without the twenty verses of the prologue in **N**), because a folio has dropped from the manuscript (Smith 1987, 317).

[30] *F&P* **L** lacks the title and the first thirty-five verses, because a folio has dropped from the manuscript (Cupane 1995c, 447).

8a Διήγησις ἐξαίρετος, ἐρωτικὴ καὶ ξένη
τοῦ Ιμπερίου θαυμαστοῦ καὶ κόρης Μαργαρώνης (*I&M* **V** 1–2)
Καὶ πῶς νὰ γράψω τὴν ἀρχήν, πῶς νὰ τὴν φανερώσω,
ἀφήγησιν τὴν ἔμορφην, ἐρωτικήν, μεγάλην (*I&M* **V** 3–4)

8b ᾽Αρχὴ γενομένη ἐν χώρᾳ Λατιναίων ὀνόματι Προβέντσας
τοῦ μεγάλου ρηγὸς υἱὸν ᾽Εμπερίου καὶ Μαργαρώνας (*I&M* **N** 1–2)
Καὶ πῶς νὰ γράψω ἐκ τὰς ἀρχὰς καὶ νὰ τὸ φανερώσω,
ἀφήγησιν πανέμορφην, ἐρωτικήν, μεγάλην (*I&M* **N** 3–4)

Terms signalling some type of narration appear in all instances; these terms are divided into two groups. The first group comprises six poems with a very similar overall plot (nrs. 1a–b, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8a): a couple of lovers carries *equally* the protagonist roles, the boy finds the girl, they "marry" (i.e. they wed or perceive their sexual union as marriage), are separated, re-united and the story finishes with a happy ending. The headings and the prologues include such terms as διήγησις/διήγημα ("tale"; nrs. 2, 3, 5, 7, 8a) and ἀφήγησις/ἀφήγημα ("narrative"; nrs. 1a–b, 8a–b). These terms are accompanied by adjectives defining the content of the narrative, such as ἐρωτικός ("pertaining to love"; nrs. 1a, 3, 5, 8a), or its quality, such as ἐξαίρετος ("outstanding"; nrs. 2, 5, 8a). The adjective *exairetos* is exactly the attribute used by scribe **λ** of *LogPar* **L** to qualify the real love story he had in mind.

The second group includes the remaining two poems that also have close overall similarities (nrs. 4a, 6): the plot does not concentrate exclusively on the couple, but primarily on the male protagonist; this protagonist is an ancient hero (Achilles and Paris); the story is more or less biographical, in the sense that we see how the hero is born, brought up, educated, how he performs wondrous deeds, embarks on his amorous adventure, loses his beloved and then meets himself a tragic end. Here the term found in the headings is ἀρχή combined with an explicative genitive ("beginning of <the narrative concerning> Achilles"). The same term is also found in the *War of Troy* (᾽Αρχὴ τῆς Τρωάδος), and, though this is not a narrative about love, it is decidedly about ancient heroes. Interestingly enough, this broad division into two groups corresponds to the categorization proposed by Moennig (1999, 1–2), even though he does not see an indicator of genre in the terms used in the headings.

There are some variations to this pattern. For example, the *Byzantine Iliad* presents us with two headings (nr. 6), the one following the pattern of the first group and using the term *diegesis*, the other following the pattern of the second group and using the term *arche*. The presence of these two different headings could be an indication that the scribe was not certain to what type of narrative the specific poem belonged.

The case of *Imperios and Margarona* is more complex. In redaction **V** (nr. 8a) the heading follows the first group, while the heading of redaction **N** (nr. 8b) follows the second. To all appearances, this looks like evidence that the headings and the various terms are of little use for generic categorization. Now, *I&M* (a free adaptation of an as yet unidentified version of *Pierre de Provence et la belle Maguellone*) is a poem where the reader is confronted with a partly biographical plot; we learn about the protagonist's birth, upbringing, education, heroic deeds and departure from his country (*I&M* **V** 13–235; *I&M* **N** ff. 76r–82v), and this reminds us of the second group. However, once the young prince has found his princess, the story unfolds according to the pattern of the first group. This explains, I think, why the redactor of **V** chose *diegesis* and the redactor of **N** preferred *arche*. Moreover, redaction **N** has survived in the *Cod. Neapol. gr.* III-B-27, a composite manuscript in which four smaller codices, written by four different scribes, were bound together because they all included vernacular texts (Smith 1999, 1–5). The second part of the manuscript (ff. 13–99), besides *I&M* **N**, also transmitts *Achilleid* **N** and the oldest redaction (**χ**) of another "historical" narrative poem, the *Tale of Belisarius* (Bakker-van Gemert 1988). On the one hand, the decision of the scribe (or of his exemplar) to place *Ach* **N** and *I&M* **N** together is an indication that *arche* was perceived as a distinct narrative category connected to a biographical plot. On the other, the presence of *Belisarius* in the little book is an indication that this category has a "mythological-historical" character, irrespective of the inclusion or not of an amorous adventure.

In *Achilleid* **O**, a short poem of 760 verses and possibly reflecting an oral performance (Smith 1988), we find the term *diegesis* in the heading (nr. 4b), but neither this nor any other narrative term appears in the text. The redactor of *Ach* **O** characterized his text as *diegesis*, possibly because the poem does not include the prologue and the "historical" end at Troy, two essential elements of *Ach* **N** (Smith 1999, 77–83, 148–153). Which of the two redactions, the shorter **O** or the longer **N**, is closer to the original is of little relevance for their placement to the one or the other group, because, as texts, they form independent poems to be studied in their own right and not simply as deflations or obfuscations of a lost archetypus.

Obviously, no absolute consistency can be expected in the use of such terms. Nonetheless, it is quite clear that the first group of terms reflects a convention that characterizes *erotike diegesis* as a specific fictional category with an exclusively erotic subject, while *arche* characterizes a different category of fiction where love plays a central but not exclusive role. So far then, it can be said that the "tale of love", as it emerged from the three testimonies we discussed and as it was therefore understood by Byzantine readers in the first half of the fourteenth century, is identical with the first

group of romances (*L&R, V&C, K&C, F&P, A&S, I&M*): the narrative focuses equally on the male and female protagonists, accentuating in this way the role of the "girl", whose presence becomes a chief characteristic of the *erotike diegesis*. Here lies a clear distinction from the second group of romances (*Ach, ByzIl*), where the poets opt for the male protagonist as axis of their plot, even if the love affair takes up most of the story. This thematic and structural choice seems to me like a form of deviation from a generic canon; it is a point to which I shall return.

There is one further element that, in my opinion, signals the genre of "erotic tale"; it is the rubrics to be found embedded in the texts of the poems, mostly as fifteen-syllable verses, but sometimes also as prose lemmata. They have various functions, such as pointing to the development of the story, summarizing previous episodes, indicating a specific rhetorical device, but also serving as index markers for finding a passage in the manuscript (Agapitos 1991, 95–103). These consistent functions tie in very well with the narrative function accorded to the headings which, as we have seen, show a similar degree of consistency.

Until recently, the rubrics were considered later additions by the scribes in their supposed role as improvising redactors of the texts during the actual process of copying; thus, this important type of *peritext* (to use Gérard Genette's terminology) was omitted by most editors as being extraneous to the assumed original that had to look like a modern, i.e. continuous, poem (Agapitos-Smith 1992, 68–69; Agapitos-Smith 1994, 66–71). Yet even a cursory glance at the manuscript material shows that rubrics do appear in fourteen out of the fifteen codices transmitting the vernacular romances. When a romance survives in more than one manuscript, the rubrics mostly appear at the same places. For example, in *L&R* **α** the rubrics appear consistently in the first half of the text and always at the same place in the three individual versions of this redaction (**S N P**). In redactions **E** and **V** of *L&R*, the rubrics are distributed over the entire text; however, in the first half they appear in exactly the same places as the rubrics in redaction **α** (Agapitos 2004d, ch. IV). Furthermore, in *F&P* and *I&M*, being both free adaptations of Western romances, rubrics are to be found in the manuscripts, though such rubrics do not belong to the peritextual conventions of Western chivalric narrative. The same situation pertains to *A&S*, an adaptation of an Eastern tale, where the added rubrics have "byzantinized" the text. Contrary to the above, there are no rubrics whatsoever in the manuscripts transmitting the Byzantine redactions of the "epic" *Digenis Akritis* and the "historical" *Tale of Belisarius*, and this suggests that rubrics did not form part of the heroic-historical narratives.

The only exception to the situation just described is the *Cod. Par. gr.* 2909.

Besides transmitting *Velthandros and Chrysantza*, the manuscript contains a redaction of the *Tale of Belisarius* by Emmanuel Limenites (Rhodes, late 15th century), the satirical-didactic poems of Stephanos Sachlikes (Crete, 14th century), a redaction of the twelfth-century didactic poem *Spaneas*, as well as the historical poems *The Fall of Constantinople* (anonymous) and *The Pest of Rhodes* (also by Limenites). In the text of *V&C* we find only the heading, an introductory rubric and the last two verses of the prologue written in red ink. This indicates that originally there had been rubrics in the text, but that they either were removed by the scribe or had been already removed in his exemplar. Such an intervention would make *V&C*—a romance with a distinctly Anatolian and historically precise setting—resemble all other historic-didactic texts in the manuscript, where no rubrics are to be found, either in this or any other manuscripts transmitting them. We may therefore assume with a fair degree of certainty that the embedded rubrics are a generic characteristic of the erotic tale specifically.

This assumption is supported by two further groups of evidence. Firstly, similar rubrics are to be found in almost all of the manuscripts transmitting the three Komnenian novels that survive complete: Eumathios Makrembolites' *Hysmine and Hysminias* (= *H&H*), Theodoros Prodromos' *Rhodanthe and Dosikles* (= *R&D*), Niketas Eugeneianos' *Drosilla and Charikles* (= *D&C*).[31] The rubrics have the same functions as in the texts of the vernacular romances. Three of these codices date from the thirteenth century and one from the early fourteenth; in other words, they belong (i) to a time long before any of the surviving manuscripts of the Palaiologan romances had been written, and (ii) to a type of manuscript where the supposed scribe as redactor could not have "disfigured" the original by any additions of his own.

Secondly, in the manuscript preserving *On Chastity*, red rubrics are to found throughout the poem, either embedded in the text column or as lemmata in the margins (Schönauer 1996, Taf. I; Agapitos 2004d, pl. 20). Red rubrics are also to be found in the margins of the manuscript transmitting redaction **L** of the *Consolatory Fable*.[32] These rubrics are a clear indication that this type of peritext is employed to highlight the generic frame of the two "erotic"-allegorical narratives. If, then, rubrics appear in the erotic novels of the twelfth century and the allegorical poems of the fourteenth, and this practice is similar to the situation found in the manuscripts of all eight

[31] Readily available texts in Conca 1994; the rubrics, however, are not to be found there, but only in the critical editions by Conca 1990 (Eugeneianos) and Marcovich 1992 (Prodromos); they are not included in any edition of Makrembolites. For a photographic sample of such a rubric see Agapitos 2000a, pl. 2 (Prodromos).

[32] They have to be extracted with great difficulty from the chaotic apparatus of Lambros 1906.

vernacular romances (*diegeseis* and *archai*), we must assume that these rubrics (i) despite the problems involved in their transmission, form part of the original composition of each text, (ii) they are an internal characteristic of a broader generic category "erotic narrative", and (iii) they are one clear point of connection, both visually and textually, between the Palaiologan romances and the Komnenian novels.

IV. *From concept to structure*

So far, the analysis has suggested that the vernacular erotic tales were viewed by the society that produced them as an entity, even if these poems differ between them in various ways. The central connecting theme is love, equally exchanged and exclusively shared between the two protagonists. Love is decidedly not, as in the case of the *Digenis Akritis*, part of the male protagonist's sexual and social bravado in his formation as a "model" hero. Digenis' carnal encounter with and subjugation of the "Amazon" Maximou is presented by him to his wife as an act of prowess (*DigAkr* **E** 1562–1599) or to himself as a moral failure leading to adultery (*DigAkr* **G** 4.593–608). This attitude distinguishes Digenis completely from the male protagonists of the *archai* and, much more so, of the *diegeseis*, since none of them involves himself in an "affair" other than with the female protagonist.[33] In three of the eight texts a formal wedding precedes the lovers' union (*L&R*,[34] *A&S, I&M*). In those cases where the protagonists do engage in sex, they perceive this sexual union in terms of a private marriage that might (*V&C, Ach, F&P*) or might not (*K&C, ByzIl*) be publicly ratified by a formal wedding ceremony (Smith 1991–92, 87–93; Smith 1999, 129–138, 141–144; Agapitos 1993b, 112–113, 121, 126).

The narrative function of this marriage scene is to signal with its deceptively happy ending the change in the fortunes of the protagonists, for it is immediately after their marriage that they are separated and the story takes

[33] Even the "negative" hero Paris in the *Byzantine Iliad*, who embarks on an adulterous affair with Helen, perceives his relationship with her as final; this is the reason why the lovers flee the court of Menelaus and return to Troy (*ByzIl* 661–763).

[34] Beaton 1996, 109 and 127 (quoting *L&R* **E** 2211–2216 and *L&R* **S** 1114–1116) firmly believes that Livistros and Rhodamne actually make love when they meet for the first time at the edge of a forest next to a meadow outside Silvercastle; Cupane 1986, 65 is more cautious in her interpretation of this "vague" passage. However, the supposed vagueness is due only to the textual difficulties in the manuscripts transmitting redactions **α** and **E** and to the lack of a study of the romance's vocabulary; it becomes quite clear from the critical text of *L&R* **α** 2342–2376 that no love-making is involved in this scene.

on a sad turn. As to the meaning of the marriage scene, I would suggest that, within the conventions of erotic narrative, it represents the moment when the two lovers strengthen their emotional bond through a formal ritual which confirms their reciprocal faith and, thus, transforms them irrevocably into man and wife. Despite the "premarital" sexual union of the lovers in five out of eight poems, the concept of love behind the relation of the protagonists is rather conservative. Be that as it may, love is not the main issue in the *Digenis*, as it is in the eight Palaiologan romances and perceived as such by Manuel Philes, the scribe λ of the *Consolatory Fable* and Theodoros Meliteniotes.

The function and meaning of the protagonists' marriage in the story brings us to the issue of narrative structure. Over the past thirty years, narrative structure has been the subject most often studied in literary analyses of the vernacular romances; with the help of various literary theories, a broad spectrum of approaches has been used. Formalist analysis of narrative functions has brought to the fore some of the stereotypical ("wonder-tale") characteristics of the romances (Aleksidze 1979, 270–304; Kechagioglou 1982); motif analysis in combination with structural functions has pointed to the symbolic or allegorical meaning of stereotypical motifs, such as "Eros the King", the "Castle", "education of the hero" and the "marriage scene" (Cupane 1973–74, Cupane 1978, Nørgaard 1989, Smith 1991–92); plot elements, such as the "biographical beginning", the "combat scene" and the "exchange of letters", have been studied in more detail (Smith 1988, Agapitos 1996b, Moennig 1999, Cupane 2004); with the help of narratology and a variety of theoretical models, micro- and macrostructural analysis has been fervently conducted (Emrich 1982, Fulciniti 1984–85, Fulciniti 1987, Beaton 1996, Rizzo-Nervo 1999, Chrysomalli-Henrich 2002), although in some cases the rigid application of narratological theories has distorted medieval rhetorical conventions into modern authorial practices. In this context, I cannot avoid mentioning my own book (Agapitos 1991), which is so far the most detailed attempt to understand the function of narrative vocabulary, sequence, time and space in *L&R, V&C* and *K&C* within the broader context of Byzantine rhetorical and poetic conventions, although the study focuses more on the technical *how* and, thus, seems to offer less as to the interpretative *why*.

One answer as to the *why* of narrative macrostructure was given by Carolina Cupane (1986) in her study of *avanture* and *amour* in the romances (see also her broader synthesis in Cupane 1999). In comparing the Palaiologan romances to the Komnenian novels and the French chivalric romances, she recognized that in the learned texts there is no quest of adventure; the protagonists are presented as passive recipients of Fate's capricious blows. In contrast to this attitude, the Western romances display a balanced and

organic interaction between the hero's quest for adventure and the role of love in this quest, a reflection of the socio-cultural context of Western feudal societies. Cupane argued that in the Palaiologan romances adventure is initially introduced but once the lovers meet, it is dropped in favour of the passive approach to Fate; in other words, the heroes lose their spirit of chivalric adventure and revert to the role of the lamenting lover. *K&C* is an apparently good example of this change: the spirited prince Kallimachos willingly seeks adventure, but once he has entered the Castle of the Ogre and has met princess Chrysorrhoe dangling naked by her hair, he turns into a courageless person who becomes the victim of Fate. Seen in this light, the romance falls into two uneven parts (*K&C* 1–463 and 464–2607) that are simply placed next to each other, rather than developing organically the one from the other. Thus, the French *two-part concept* has not been successfully incorporated into the narrative, because it does not have any social and cultural meaning for Constaninopolitan courtly society. Cupane (1986, 63) suggested that, even if this "small innovation" was allowed on a literary level because the romances are not part of the classical canon, its use led to a "mixed product", torn between tradition and innovation.

It is quite probable that the notional pair *avanture-amour* explains the presence of an adventurous opening section in some of the Byzantine romances. Only, I am not certain that it marks a structural or even unsuccessful break in the linear plot of the *diegeseis*, making the two parts fit uneasily next to each other. It certainly does not explain the exploits of the hero once he has met the heroine in the *archai* and their subsequent tragic deaths. If we look at *K&C* as a whole, we cannot fail to notice that it is divided into two parts on the basis of the poet's authorial interventions (on the concept, see Agapitos 1991, 74–84). Once the amorous part of the story, where the young lovers enjoy each other's company, comes to an end (*K&C* 840), the poet explicitly refers back to the prologue and points out that what brings sweetness brings also bitterness (*K&C* 843–844: ἀλλ' ὅπερ φέρει τὸ γλυκὺν φέρει καὶ τὴν πικρίαν, | ὡς ἔγνωκας, ὡς ἔμαθες ἀπὸ τοῦ προοιμίου). He then embarks on the story of the rival king, opening this section in the same "wonder-tale" manner in which he had opened the beginning of the romance (*K&C* 846ff. ≈ *K&C* 25ff.). This authorial intervention is preceded by a rubric signalling for the first time the appearance of angry Fate and her role in the subsequent events (*K&C* 841–842: Ναί, μοιρογράφημα κακόν, ναί, μαινομένη τύχη, | τὴν ὄρεξίν σου πλήρωσε, ποίησε τὸ θέλημά σου). In my opinion, this break would be absolutely recognizable to the Byzantine reader because it is formulaic, repetitive and self-referential. No other similar break is to be found in the rest of the text. Consequently, I understand the romance as displaying a *two-part structure* (*K&C* 1–840 and 841–2607) related (i) to the

"utopian" wonder-tale setting opted for by the poet and expressed in narrative terms through the "once-upon-a-time" beginning, and (ii) to the change of fortune caused by the appearance of the rival who abducts the "girl". Here lies for me a problem in interpretative method. The *theoretical concept* of "adventure-love", even if it is valid for Western medieval romances, once imposed on a Byzantine tale of love, is not reflected in the *signalled structure* of the text. I prefer to approach the interpretation of the texts the other way round, by establishing first the conventional structure and then seeing if a concept can be inferred from such a convention. This approach is what I have termed elsewhere the analysis of a text's *inner operative principles* or "interpretation from within" (Agapitos 1991, 16–19, 334–335; Ljubarskij 1998, 25–26).

I would like to illustrate this approach by looking at three further romances. The narrative structure of redaction **N** of the *Achilleid* has recently been discussed by three scholars. On the one hand, Beaton (1996, 117–118) and Moennig (1999, 7–8) see the romance's main part divided into three sections—war (*Ach* **N** 21–751), love (752–1358), war and love (1359–1859)—and framed by a general prologue (1–20) and an epilogue in Troy (1860–1926). On the other hand, Smith (1999, 77 and 118) divides the story into two parts organized around the hero's conversion to Eros (*Ach* **N** 1–890 and 891–1926). These proposals are quite ingenious, both the *three-part concept* of "war-love-war" and the *two-part concept* of the "conversion to love", but, in my opinion, they project onto the text modern notions of thematic and structural organization. Looking at the passages where the three scholars place the relevant breaks, we will discover that these breaks are not signalled in the text. Yet such signalling is the only way within the conventions of a stereotyped and rhetorical medieval narrative discourse to point to any structuring device that is infused with a specific meaning.[35] Byzantine readers therefore would not be able to recognize the breaks suggested by the three scholars.

However, if we turn to the Naples manuscript, we will recognize the presence of two major breaks giving to *Ach* **N** a clear *three-part structure*. The opening of each section is signalled by a broad decorative band, a rubric in red indicating what is to follow and an artfully drawn initial letter for the opening verse. The three sections are the following: (i) the beginning of the whole text on f. 13r; (ii) the beginning of a biographical part on f. 13v; (iii) the beginning of an admonitory part on f. 52r (see Agapitos 2002, pls. 1–3). Consequently, the romance in **N** is structured around three narrative units: (i) the general prologue on the devastating power of Eros (*Ach* **N** 1–20); (ii) the

[35] This type of discourse is not restricted to the romances, but can be found in other narrative genres as well; on historiography see Ljubarskij 1998, on hagiography Agapitos 2004a.

biographical narrative that is concluded with the public marriage of the two lovers (21–1636); a moralizing narrative about the evils of this world, leading to the death of the maiden and of Achilles (1637–1926). At the passage from the second to the third section (f. 51v) the scribe has written the word τέλος ("end") and has drawn a thin decorative band after the closure of the biograhical narrative with its happy ending, leaving the last third of the page blank. Moreover, this closure is visually juxtaposed to the opening of the last section, since the passage takes place from a left-hand to a right-hand page of the open book (ff. 51v–52r; Agapitos 2002, pl. 4). This tripartite form highlights the rhetorical organization of the narrative—prologue, main part, epilogue—and reflects a functional and recognizable medieval structure. On the basis of the conventional plot elements of the *erotike diegesis* as generic category, a Byzantine reader (i) would recognize the obligatory prologue informing him about the erotic content of the story, (ii) would read without any narrative break the protagonist's "biography" (*arche*) finishing with the expected happy ending, and (iii) would then find himself confronted with a complete reversal of what he has read. This narrative technique of creating tension and then offering moral precept seems to me a further deviation from a canon, similar to the choice of using the hero's "biography" as axis of the plot. A comparison with redactions **L** and **O** of the *Achilleid*, but also with *I&M* **N** and *Belisarius* **χ** transmitted in the Naples manuscript, shows that the three-part structure of *Ach* **N** is a specific device of this particular redaction and therefore represents an inner operative principle of its literaricity.

Alexander and Semiramis survives in two closely related but still distinct versions **B** and **S**. The new critical edition (Moennig 2004) allows us to examine for the first time the text of a hitherto unknown romance that is a vernacular verse adaptation of a late fourteenth-century Ottoman prose tale reworking a slightly older Persian model of the story of the princess of China (later known as Turandot) and the riddle test. Moennig (2004, 93–155) has demonstrated in detail how strongly the author of *A&S* is indebted in terms of language, metrical practices, rhetorical devices and narrative techniques to the conventions found in the other Byzantine romances. And yet, when reading *A&S*, the overall impression is of a text differing in some way from the other romances, a sense not unsimilar to the impression one receives from reading the Byzantine adaptations of *F&P* and *I&M*. In my opinion, this difference does not lie so much in the ideological and cultural distance between the Italian-French West, the Ottoman-Persian East and Byzantium, but in the overall adhesion of the Byzantine redactors to the narrative structure of their respective models. In the case of *A&S*, despite the transfer of the story's settting from China to the Eastern Mediterranean, despite the use of Alexander and Semiramis as "historical" characters of a fictional Hellenic-

Syrian encounter, despite the presence of Byzantine ideology in the representation of Semiramis' court, despite even the appearance of Christianity, the story as narrated does not follow either the "wonder-tale" two-part structure of *K&C* or the biographical three-part structure of *Ach* **N**, but clearly retains the specific narrative pattern of its Eastern model that uses different techniques in the organization of narrative sequence.

For example, once Alexander has answered the first three sets of riddles, he retires to his humble abode and reports to the old woman offering him shelter on what has happened so far, while Semiramis asks the advice of her maids and her eunuchs how to handle the successful suitor (*A&S* **B** 516–555). The forty verses presenting this action display some of the conventional characteristics of narrative discourse to be found in the early Palaiologan romances. However, the sequence of events and the stereotypical elements connecting them present a wholly different picture. The simultaneity of action in this scene (Alexander going to his abode and talking to the old woman ≈ Semiramis going to her apartments and talking to her attendants) is not marked by any signal of the type we saw in *K&C*, while the narration shifts four times between the narrative spaces of the two protagonists (Alexander in the palace ≠ Semiramis in the palace ≠ Alexander in the old woman's house ≠ Semiramis in the palace). Moreover, once Semiramis has disclosed to her maids her fear of shame (*A&S* **B** 588–596), a sudden narrative break occurs in the form of what I have termed elsewhere (Agapitos 1991, 227–235) the "passage-of-time" formula of the day-night pattern (**B** 597: ὅμως γὰρ ἦλθεν ἡ αὐγή, ἡ νύκτα ἐδιάβη). Though the author of *A&S* knows both the conventions of simultaneity and the day-night pattern, he does not use them to create a clearly defined structural unit. I do not perceive this as a "flaw" in the romance's narrative structure, but as the adhesion to the different narrative order of the romance's model.

Livistros and Rhodamne survives in three redactions: **α** (= versions **S N P**), datable to the end of the fourteenth century, but reflecting fairly closely the lost original of the thirteenth century; **E**, datable to the early fifteenth century and written in Crete; **V**, datable to ca. 1480 and written either in Peloponnesian Nauplion, a Venetian dominion at that time, or in Naples, which had a Greek community and some scholarly activity. The romance displays the most complex structure among all of the Byzantine vernacular tales of love: (i) there is a frame-story; a narrator invites a noble queen and her court to listen to what he has to tell about a man inexperienced in love (*L&R* **α** 1–26 / **N** 1–26),[36] and then, at the very end of the text, this narrator again

[36] Since the critical edition of *L&R* **α** has not yet appeared in print, I include the verse numeration of the individual versions for easier reference.

addresses the queen (*L&R* **α** 4579–4601 / **S** 3240–3262); (ii) there is the main story of the Latin king Livistros and the Latin princess Rhodamne; (iii) there is the secondary story of the Armenian prince Klitovon and the Armenian princess Myrtane. The narrator and the queen of the frame-story prove to be no other than Klitovon and Myrtane. The romance, after the narrator's prologue, begins *in medias res*, since it starts at the point where Klitovon and Livistros meet after the abduction of Rhodamne by Verderichos, the cruel emperor of Egypt. The first part of the story of Livistros and Rhodamne is told by Livistros in a proper *ab ovo* manner to Klitovon as an encased narrative, since the Armenian prince is the chief narrating voice of the romance; the second part of the story is told directly by Klitovon to his audience, since he actively participates in the rescue of Rhodamne.[37]

Owing to the lack of a reliable edition for any of the three redactions of *L&R*, no detailed answers have been given as to the *why* of its narrative. Beaton (1996, 126–127)[38] suggested that the romance is divided into two parts: a first part presenting Livistros' initiation to love (the break at *L&R* **E** 2587≈ **S** 1442 / **N** 2280) and a second, similarly organized, part presenting the quest for Rhodamne after her abduction by Verderichos. According to Beaton, this *two-part concept* reflects a repetitive structure that begins both times with the search for the "girl" and ends with her retrieval. Furthermore, Beaton suggested that the exact centre of the romance in redaction **E** and version **N** is at the point where the two lovers meet for the first time eye to eye, though such mathematical calculations run the risk of proving unsubstantiated when conducted on the basis of unreliable printed editions. In contrast to the two-part or three-part concepts proposed for *K&C* and *Ach* **N**, Beaton's suggestion as to a narrative break in *L&R* is indeed borne out by the manuscripts, because at that particular point an extended rubric indicates that the "third chapter" of the romance begins (*L&R* **α** 2720–2722 / **S** 1436–1438):

> Τρίτον ἀγάπης ἄκουσμα καὶ ἀφήγησις καὶ λόγος,
> λόγος καρδιοπονόθλιβος, δακρυοεξῃρημένος,
> τοῦ πολυπόνου τοῦ ρηγὸς Λιβίστρου καὶ Ροδάμνης.
>
> Love's third listening and tale and discourse,
> a discourse sorrowful and heart-rending, outstandingly adorned with tears,
> about the sorrow-laden King Livistros and Rhodamne.

[37] For an analysis of the complex narrative, its system of encasement and its time structure, see Agapitos 1991, 133–140 and 255–271.

[38] For his analysis he primarily uses redaction **E** and secondarily versions **S N** of the romance, though he says exactly the opposite; see Agapitos-Smith 1992, 59.

The appearance of a chapter, characterized, moreover, as "listening" (ἄκουσμα), is singular among the Palaiologan romances. As I have shown elsewhere (Agapitos 1991, 269–271; Agapitos 2004d, ch. IV.1), *L&R* was originally divided into four chapters (**α** 1–951 / **N** 1–740, **α** 952–2719[39] / **N** 741–979 + **S** 1–1442, **α** 2720–3821 / **S** 1443–2522, **α** 3822–4601 / **S** 2523–3262). These chapters follow markedly repetitive and therefore recognizable narrative patterns: each "discourse" (λόγος) begins in the morning and ends in the evening, while the formulaic vocabulary and the identical narrative situation (a narration is interrupted and then resumed) force the recipients to perceive the romance as a *four-part structure*.

At present, I am unable to name one basic characteristic for each chapter of *L&R* **α**, as was possible in the case of *Ach* **N** and its rhetorical three-part structure. The main organizing principle behind the four chapters of *L&R* seems to lie in the day-night pattern superimposed on the story by Klitovon. If, now, we compare redaction **α** with redactions **E** and **V**, we will notice that in these later reworkings any reference to "chapters" has been systematically removed. In one case (*L&R* **V** 2366–2385 ≈ **α** 2710–2729 / **S** 1430–1449) even the temporal formulas opening and closing the respective parts have been cancelled and new material has been added. Thus, the four-part structure of redaction **α** with its strong breaks and its complex encased narrative has been progressively smoothed out in redaction **E** and even more so in redaction **V**; in other words, the romance's inverted and "compartmentalized" plot has been made to look, at least externally, more like the linear, chapterless plot of the other tales of love. How is this peculiar situation to be explained?

I will attempt to answer by returning first to the manuscripts. Following the capture of Constantinople by the knights of the Fourth Crusade in April 1204, the Byzantine Empire broke down into three separate states centred around Nicaea, Trebizond and Arta. The Laskarid government in Nicaea most emphatically promoted its claims to be the rightful successor of the fallen Roman Empire. In so doing, it introduced major changes in administration and finances, redefined its diplomatic contacts with the West, while, at the same time, looked back to the glorious days of the Komnenian emperors. More specifically, at or around the court of Ioannes III Batatzes (1222–1254) and of his son Theodoros II Laskaris (1254–1258), learned men tried to collect the scattered cultural heritage of the Kom-

[39] The second chapter is also introduced by a similar rubric (*L&R* **α** 952–954: Δεύτερος λόγος ἔρωτος Λιβίστρου καὶ Ροδάμνης | τὸ πῶς τὸ κάστρον ηὕρασιν καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα πάλε | πῶς τὴν ἀρχὴν ἐσέβησαν τῆς κόρης τῆς Ροδάμνης).

nenian age. Within this context, a series of manuscripts, which collected in single volumes the rhetorical production of the past two centuries, were copied.[40] Among the manuscripts written during the thirteenth century, we find eight codices trasmitting the Hellenistic and the Komnenian novels, in two cases placing an ancient and a medieval text side by side.[41] This "massive" production furnishes the unequivocal evidence that the novels were read and appreciated in the learned circles of Laskarid and early Palaiologan society (Agapitos 1998a, 126–127; Agapitos 2004d, ch. I.2).

The Hellenistic novels are divided into books, though the narrative organization of each book does not display clearly recognizable patterns, such as an obvious temporal structure (Hägg 1971, 23–86). The Komnenian novels are also divided into books (βιβλίον is the term used in Prodromos and Eugeneianos), but here the internal make-up looks different. An examination of narrative order within each book reveals that the three fully surviving novels display specific, repetitive and, thus, recognizable patterns. Firstly, each book is organized around a steady sequence of space and time,[42] while, secondly, the opening and closing of most books corresponds to the beginning and the end of a day (*R&D* 2.1–2, 6.1–3; *D&C* 2.1–4, 7.1–8, 9.1–2; *H&H* 2.1, 5.20–6.1, 7.1), one of the oldest "epic" devices, not used, however, in the ancient novels. Within each book the narrative is structured according to fully defined "episodes" (ἐπεισόδια διηγήματα in the terminology of Psellos), filled with monologues, dialogues, laments, songs, even letters; at the same time, any sense of extended action has been minimalized. This is a rhetorical and representational organization of narrative, reflected in Photios' generic term *dramatikon* and its transformation by Makrembolites into *drama* (Agapitos 1998a, 132–143). Narration as action is not favoured in this type of narrative. I think that this concept of narrative as "rhetorical drama" also explains the passivity of its protagonists:

[40] Indicatively, I mention the following important codices: *Scorial.* II-Y-10 (a vast collection of rhetorical works by a variety of authors), *Basil.* A-III-20 (collected works of Eustathios of Thessalonike), *Par. gr.* 1182 and *Vat. Barb. gr.* 240 (ample selections of works by Michael Psellos), *Oxon. Baroc.* 131 (a vast collection of philosophical, rhetorical and poetic works of the eleventh and twelfth centuries).

[41] These manuscripts are: *Vat. gr.* 114 (Makrembolites, Tatius), *Vat. gr.* 1390 (Heliodorus, Makrembolites), *Marc. gr.* 410 (Heliodorus), *Marc. gr.* 412 (Eugeneianos), *Vat. gr.* 121 (Prodromos), *Vat. Barb. gr.* 29 (Makrembolites), *Laurent. Conv. Soppr.* 627 (Longus, Tatius, Chariton, Xenophon), *Oxon. Baroc.* 131 (Makrembolites).

[42] This is particularly prominent in Makrembolites (Nilsson 2001, 92–96, 136–141).

they are primarily spectators of their own tragedies (Agapitos 1998a, 155–156).[43] The fiction of a Hellenic setting reinforced this sense of *drama*; at the same time, it provided the necessary "exotic" distance to the erotic plot, while catering to the ideological needs of Komnenian society that "discovered" Hellenism in the twelfth century (Magdalino 1991, Macrides-Magdalino 1992). Be that as it may, this "static" and "compartmentalized" structure of the learned novels, where each book has a certain narrative autonomy, is related to their recitation in front of a λογιώτατον θέατρον ("literary salon"), held by various aristocratic men and women as patrons of the arts.[44]

If we redirect our gaze to *L&R*, we will notice that this romance displays all of the characteristics mentioned above: (i) the narrative is divided visually and textually into four chapters, here referred to as "discourse" (*logos*) or "listening" (*akousma*), rather than "book" (*biblion*); (ii) the break between chapters is represented as a passage from evening to morning; (iii) each chapter is organized around clearly defined episodes, signalled as such by a formalized and repetitive vocabulary; (iv) extended action is avoided, while the presence of the discoursive and the descriptive modes is overwhelming (Agapitos 1991, 171–176, 186–193). Furthermore, *L&R* is a first-person narrative, a case singular among the vernacular romances, but a device to be found in Makrembolites and, of course, Achilles Tatius. Similarly, the *in medias res* beginning of the romance is unique among the vernacular poems, but a prominent characteristic of Prodromos, Eugeneianos and, obviously, Heliodorus. Moreover, *L&R* is the only romance where an incontestable reference to a *topos* of the Hellenistic and Komnenian novels can be found (Cupane 1973–74, 257 n. 41); it is the list of *exempla* taken from nature and demostrating the power of Eros (*L&R* **α** 173–184 / **N** 161–171). Exceptional in *L&R* is the use of two types of metre,[45] a device found only in Prodromos and Eugeneianos. In general, *L&R* includes the highest number of various motifs, plot elements and narrative devices, that are also to be found in the Komnenian novels (Agapitos 1993b, 101–117). All of this suggests that the

[43] That adventure and the "chivalric spirit" played an important part in the Komnenian aristocratic *imaginaire* has been shown by Kazhdan 1984 and Kazhdan-Epstein 1985, 110–116; I would suggest that this development is the actual cultural reaction to the Western concept of chivalry, with which the Byzantines were initially confronted at the First Crusade during the reign of Alexios I Komnenos.

[44] For Prodromos' novel in such a context see Agapitos 2000a; for a full analysis of all relevant texts see Agapitos 2004c.

[45] Two songs in eight-syllable verse: **α** 2044–2065 / **S** 825–835 and **α** 4205–4224 / **S** 2868–2887.

romance was originally intended for recitation in front of an aristocratic audience.[46]

However, *L&R* also displays many of the characteristics found in the other Palaiologan narratives of love: (i) the characterization of the romance as an ἀφήγημαν ἀγάπης and the presence of a fully developed narrative vocabulary; (ii) the "wonder-tale" opening for all encased narratives; (iii) the organization of time according to a day-night pattern on a microstructural level and a year-by-year pattern on a macrostructural level; (iv) the presence of a grand *vision d'amour* connected to a rudimentary *avanture-amour* opening; (v) the appearance of a "contemporary-historical" setting; (vi) the obvious presence of Latins and Latin customs; (vii) the use of the vernacular idiom, albeit in a highly complex and artful style; (viii) the inclusion of "folklore" thematics, such as the Saracen Witch and her magical objects or a particular poetic imagery that is echoed in Modern Greek folksongs.[47] Furthermore, any reference to the *Rhomaioi* (as in *V&C*) or a juxtaposition of a "Hellenic" hero to a Frankish adversary (as in *Ach*) is avoided with absolute consistency. At the same time, the romance includes some prominent Byzantine imagery, such as the palace of Eros, Eros himself as emperor and the judicial procedures at his court, Livistros' coronation and acclamation as co-emperor of Rhodamne's father. If, then, we were to be asked to name one "mixed product" among the vernacular romances, *L&R* would be given the first place (Cupane 1999, 48–49), though I would interpret this *mixture* as a conscious and experimental act of the romance's anonymous, yet undoubtedly educated, author who tried to create a different type of narrative leading to a new generic category.

The manuscript and textual evidence indicates that *L&R* was composed at the Laskarid court of Nicaea (Agapitos 2004d, ch. I.2–3). Here we find a cultural context that explains the use of the Komnenian background, the use of a new—equally "exotic" (*qua* Latin)—setting for fiction, the incorporation of Western narrative devices and imagery, the insistence on Byzantine imagery, the use of Eastern-encased narrative, and the interest in "folklore".[48]

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[46] Cupane 1995a, 100–104 excludes the possibility of actual recitation in the case of *L&R*; however, her analysis is based (as it could not have been otherwise) on the available older editions which print extremely problematic texts. Conca 1986, 36–37 tentatively suggests that all of the Palaiologan romances were destined for an oral *performance*, because they survive in so many different versions, a hypothesis that cannot be supported by the palaeographical and codicological evidence provided by the manuscripts.

[47] For example, *L&R* **α** 1742–1765 / **S** 524–547 (a letter) or **α** 3928–3956 / **S** 2629–2657 (two songs).

[48] On this particular interest at the Laskarid court see now Katsaros 2002, 255–268.

If this is so, then *L&R* forms the bridge between Komnenian and Palaiologan erotic narrative, while filling the gap of the thirteenth century, as Beck (1974a) had seen it. When the empire moved back to Constantinople in 1261, the social and cultural context changed. As the poem of Philes about the "erotic book" of prince Andronikos Palaiologos indicates, by the early fourteenth century romances were written to be read by individual readers. This, I think, explains the gradual change in the narrative structure of the remaining romances, now following a linear plot development and employing the "objective" third-person perspective of an extradiegetical narrator. This change also explains the later attempts to transform *L&R* into such a linear story and to remove some of its more obvious Byzantine cultural characteristics, especially in redaction **V** (Lendari 1993; Agapitos 2004d, ch. V.2.5).

Once the experiment of the *L&R*-poet to create through mixture a new generic category had resulted in the *erotike diegesis* (attested by scribe **λ** of the *Consolatory Fable* and in Meliteniotes' *On Chastity*, and as reflected in *V&C* and *K&C*), it was then possible to deviate from the "canon". On the one hand, this deviation produced the biographical-mythological *archai*, while, on the other, it allowed for the inclusion of different types of narrative, such as the Western *F&P* and *I&M* and the Eastern *A&S*. In my opinion, this broadening of the genre through deviation and inclusion also reflects the progressive transfer of romance production from the imperial aristocratic centres of Nicaea (*L&R* **α**) and Constantinople (*V&C, K&C, Ach* **N**) to various peripheries, such as feudal Frankish-Greek Morea (*F&P* **L** [?], *I&M* **N** [?], *L&R* **V**), Ottoman-ruled merchant Thrace (*A&S*) and Venetian-Greek Crete with its landed gentry and its urban centres (*F&P* **V** [?], *I&M* **V**, *L&R* **E**).[49]

V. "*Awe-inspiring mysteries*" *and the* "*Art of Love*"

The study of poetics in Byzantine literature is practically non-existent, despite the fact that Byzantine intellectuals produced a substantial corpus of critical texts. Very few attempts have been made to examine what these intellectuals had to say about "literature"—either in their critical work (e.g. essays, scholia, commentaries, grammars, lexica) or in other writings (e.g. letters, orations, historiography)—and to compare these pronouncements with the "literary" production of their times. The reason behind this neglect probably was a

[49] This distribution differs in some points from the one proposed by Jeffreys 1993, 313–314; see also the overview in Cupane 1995b.

guilty suspicion that the Byzantines had nothing at all to say on this matter. If such a prejudiced attitude had governed the study of learned production almost until the last decade of the previous century,[50] then this was much more so the case with vernacular production, because the concept of "popular literature" played a decisive role in viewing these texts as lacking *artistic consciousness*.[51]

Except for the three testimonies referring to "tales of love", no other Byzantine text survives that discusses the romances in any kind of critical way. This situation is not unsimilar to what we find, for example, in the case of Lives of Saints. With the exception of Photios, who dealt very selectively with saintly patriarchs (Hägg 1999), and of Michael Psellos, who devoted specifically an oration to Symeon the Metaphrast and his hagiographic project (*OratHag.* 7; Fisher 1994, 267–288), no other critical text exists that discusses this vast and immensely important genre. This should not come as a surprise, because narratives about saints and about love fell outside the scope of Byzantine philological criticism, which concerned itself primarily with the exegesis of texts for specific educational purposes (lexical analysis, rhetorical studies or theological interpretation). In this sense, poetics in the present report is to be understood as the study of those inner operative principles through which authors might explicitly or implicitly express in their literary work concepts about their art; it is an approach that has yielded a rich crop in the case of Greek and Latin poetry (e.g. Nagy 1989, Goldhill 1991, Papanghelis 1994).

Within this context, I shall concentrate on two notions that, in my opinion, play an important part in forming the poetics of the romances, namely, art as a mystery provoking the beholder's astonishment and narration as instruction. As a starting-point I have chosen the opening of *L&R* (**α** 1–751 / **N** 1–560).[52] After the prologue, Klitovon tells how he met a warrior on a

[50] For recent studies attempting to redress this imbalance see Hörandner 1996, Smith 1996b, Agapitos 1998b, Papaioannou 2000, Agapitos 2002.

[51] Beaton (1996, 65–68, 84–87), based on Cupane 1984, pointed to the significative role given in the Komnenian novels to art—visual in the form of paintings and objects described, verbal in the references to rhetoric—and its antagonistic, as he saw it, relation to nature. He also traced this theme in the vernacular romances, though he did not go beyond repeating his point about the uneasy relation between art and nature (ibid. 147–154). On Beaton's interpretation of the texts concerning this issue, see Agapitos-Smith 1992, 40–44 and 77.

[52] For a detailed discussion of this passage as to its spatio-temporal and narrative aspects, see Agapitos 1999; the article includes as an appendix a preliminary edition of *L&R* **α** 199–751 / **N** 186–560.

narrow path, how they exchanged vows of friendship and how the warrior begun to tell his story. He is king Livistros; he had no interest in love; on the contrary, he scolded anyone who involved himself in an amorous affair; one day, he goes hunting with his Relative and shoots with his bow a turtledove; the turtledove's mate kills itself and the young king is shocked; the Relative explains to him the power of Eros. They return home, Livistros falls asleep and has a dream: he rides in a beautiful meadow, is arrested by warrior cupids, brought to the palace of Eros, forced to swear an oath of vassal allegiance to the mighty ruler and told in a prophecy that he will have to search for princess Rhodamne. Livistros wakes up terrified; the Relative tells him that he knows about Rhodamne and tries to console him; night comes again, Livistros falls asleep and has a second dream: in the enclosure of a garden, Eros presents him with Rhodamne, but before the young man can take her by the hand, he wakes up caught in the pangs of love.

Livistros characterizes the turtledove incident as an "awe-inspiring mystery" (**α** 142 / **N** 132: μυστήριον φοβερόν). When asked about the incident, the Relative delivers a monologue explaining "the mysteries of love" (**α** 162 / **N** 152 and **α** 187 / **N** 174: τοῦ ἔρωτος τὰ μυστήρια). A little later, the phrase "awe-inspiring mystery" reappears in the first dream, the first time when Livistros sees a group of speaking cupid-statues warning him to cease rebelling against love (**α** 334 / **P** 2739: μυστήριον εἶδα φοβερόν), the second time when he has heard the tripartite voice of the three-faced Eros (**α** 525 / **P** 218: εἶδα φρικτὸν μυστήριον). In three out of four instances the "awe-inspiring mystery" is connected to a verbal act of instruction: the Relative's explanations, the admonitory threats of the statues, Eros' decree concerning the amorous future of Livistros. However, this image of emotional astonishment at the face of artistic creation is not unique to *L&R*, but can be found, for example, in Byzantine hymnography (the *kontakia* on the Resurrection of Christ by Romanos the Melodist in the sixth century or the "autobiographical" hymn of Symeon the New Theologian in the eleventh), a genre apparently unrelated to the romances (see my remarks in Ljubarskij 1998, 28–29).

Of extreme prominence in this section of the romance are the verbs θαυμάζω, ἐξαπορῶ and ξενίζομαι, expressing amazement, wonder and astonishment. The turtledove's voluntary death provokes in the young king a sense of astonishment and sadness (**α** 147–148 / **N** 137–138: ἐξενίστην … συνελυπήθην). Livistros begins the narration of his first dream by describing the beautiful meadow; he is filled with a sense of amazement (**α** 210 / **N** 196: ἐθαύμαζον). Escorted by a warrior cupid, Livistros enters the walled courtyard of the Realm of Eros (**α** 267 / **N** 253: Ἐρωτοκρατία); he sees architectural features, paintings, persons and objects, reads texts and hears

voices with growing astonishment.[53] When he wakes up, he refers back to this feeling (**α** 642 / **N** 467: ἐθαύμαζα); his sense of wonder continues in his second dream.[54]

Yet the notion of amazement is invoked for the first time in the romance by Klitovon as the chief narrating voice, when he, addressing his fictional audience in the prologue, refers to the effect of the story he is about to narrate (**α** 21–24 / **N** 21–24):

> Καὶ ὡς ἀπὸ τοῦ ἀφηγήματος καὶ τῆς ποθομανίας
> οἱ πάντες <νὰ> ἐγνωρίσωσι τὰς ἐρωτοπικρίας
> καὶ νὰ θαυμάσουν ἄνθρωπον ἄγροικον εἰς τὸν κόσμον,
> ἀφοῦ ἐσέβην νὰ ποθῇ, ὅσα κακὰ ὑπεστάθην.
>
> And from the narrative and the madness of desire
> let everyone come to know the bitterness of love
> and to wonder at a man boorish in the ways of the world,
> how many misfortunes he suffered, once he fell in love.

The use of the same word to characterize the astonishment of the recipient outside the story and of the protagonist inside the story is an indication that this "astonishment" carries a poetological meaning.

In Livistros' narration of his first dream, the sense of wonder is effected by the art of a craftsman. Already the meadow seems to the young king as if made by the hands of a painter (**α** 207–208 / **N** 193–194: χέρια ζωγράφου νά 'λεγες, ἂν εἶδες τὸ λιβάδιν, | τὸ ἐποῖκαν χιλιοέμμορφον, μυριοχρωματισμένον). Inside the courtyard of Eros, Livistros walks under a triumphal arch (**α** 317 / **P** 2722: τροπική). Its floor is covered by a mosaic depicting trees and birds; on a slab of green marble, placed in the centre of the mosaic, Aphrodite is depicted giving birth to Eros and Eros shooting his mother with his arrows. On the inner walls of the arch a mural represents the judgement of Paris, while at the four corners of the arch's cornice stand the four speaking cupid-statues. Each part of the arch is made by "strangely marvellous art".[55] Livistros not only stands amazed in front of this extraordinary building, but, moreover, cannot decide which part of the

[53] *L&R* **α** 316 / **P** 2721 (ξενίζομαι), **α** 341 / **P** 2746 (θαυμάζω), **α** 342 / **P** 2747 (ξενίζομαι), **α** 351 / **P** 2756 (θαυμάζω), **α** 479 / **N** 291 (ξενίζομαι), **α** 480 / **N** 292 (ἐξαπορῶ), **α** 554 / **P** 245 (θαυμάζω).

[54] *L&R* **α** 726 / **N** 537 (θαυμάζω), **α** 740 / **N** 541 (ξενίζομαι and θαυμάζω).

[55] *L&R* **α** 325 / **P** 2730 (ἐκ τέχνης παραξένου), **α** 328 / **P** 2733 (τῆς τροπικῆς ἡ τέχνη), **α** 332 / **P** 2737 (ἦσαν ἐκ τέχνης ἔρωτες), **α** 342 / **P** 2747 (τὸ εὔτεχνον).

whole he should praise (**α** 347 / **P** 2752: καὶ ἁπλῶς τὸ ποῖον οὐδὲν εἶχα πρῶτον νὰ ἐπανέσω).

When the boorish rebel is brought into the Hall of Judgment and sees Eros sitting on his throne, he is once again astonished and thinks that what he sees seems to have been painted by the hands of a "good painter craftsman" (**α** 484–485 / **N** 296–297: ἐὰν τὸ εἶδες, νὰ εἶπες ἐκπαντὸς χέρια καλοῦ ζωγράφου | τεχνίτου τὸ ἐστόρησαν, ψέγος οὐδὲν βαστάζει). Having finished the description of the three-faced ruler, the young king asks himself (**α** 494–497 / **N** 306–309):

> Τίς ὁ πλάστης
> <καὶ> τί τὸ ξενοχάραγον τὸ βλέπω, τί ἔναι ἐτοῦτο;
> Τίς νὰ μὲ εἴπῃ τὸ θεωρῶ, τίς νὰ μὲ τὸ ἑρμηνεύσῃ,
> τίς ἄνθρωπος φιλόκαλος νὰ μὲ τὸ ἀναδιδάξῃ;
>
> Who is the creator
> and what is this strangely drawn being I see, what is it really?
> Who will tell me what I see, who will interpret it for me,
> what friend of beauty will instruct me about it?

Livistros, who has already received instruction by his Relative and by his escort cupid and who has acknowledged his peasant ignorance,[56] asks for an interpreter of art, a person who is a "friend of beauty". This interpreter of art—who, in fact, does not appear, because Eros is not a painting—is a device of authorial self-referentiality well known from Longus and Achilles Tatius.[57] He also appears in Makrembolites' *Hysmine and Hysminias* as the experienced cousin of the protagonist, who explains a series of allegorical paintings. Moreover, he appears in an *ekphrasis* of a picture in the imperial palace of Constantinople by Konstantinos Manasses, author of the fourth of the Komnenian novels, surviving now only in excerpts (Conca 1994, 689–777). Manasses stands astonished in front of the picture, when a person suddenly walks in (he is characterized as δεινὸς πολυπραγμονεῖν τὰ τοιαῦτα καὶ τὰ μυστηριωδέστερα κατανοεῖν τῶν τεχνῶν) and remarks that the author will admire the craftsman even more (ἔτι πλέον θαυμάσεις τὸν ταῦτα διαμορφώσαντα), once he recognizes that what he sees is a mosaic and not a

[56] *L&R* **α** 408 / **N** 411: ἄνθρωπος ἦτον χωρικός, τίς εἶσαι οὐκ ἤξευρέ σε (Livistros asking of Love and Desire to mediate for him to Eros); **α** 514 / **N** 324: γνώρισε, ἤμουν χωρικὸς καὶ συγγνωμόνησέ το (Livistros addressing Eros).

[57] As indicated already, both novels are trasmitted in the "Nicaean" codex *Laur. Conv. Soppr.* 627.

fresco (Lampsides 1991, 196.45–50).[58] On the one hand, the use of identical vocabulary in Manasses and *L&R* to describe the mysteries of art and their wondrous effect on the beholder, and, on the other, the similar narrative situation in all five texts (astonished beholder—interpreter of art—explanation) suggest that (i) the poet of the vernacular romance consciously employed this specific motif, and (ii) that the consistent use of the imagery of mystery and astonishment bears a poetological signification encapsuled in the rare adjective ξενοχάραγος ("strangely drawn") used by Livistros in the verses quoted above. As was the case with θαυμάζω, the adjective also appears for the first time in the romance's prologue; it is used by the narrator to characterize his "strangely drawn tale of love" (**α** 17 / **N** 17: ξενοχάραγον ἀφήγημαν ἀγάπης). Thus, the anonymous author of *L&R* has inscribed himself in his own text by assuming the role of the good craftsman painter who has created by means of his wondrous art a strangely drawn work of beauty about the awe-inspiring mysteries of love and art, a work to be admired by the recipients of the story. It is the time-honoured metaphor of verbal as visual art and of the poet as painter, a metaphor employed programmatically by Prodromos in the dedicatory epigrams of his novel to his patron and used extensively by Makrembolites in the opening and closing sections of his novel (Agapitos 2000, 179–184).

The imagery of astonishment and the figure of the craftsman also appear in the opening sections of *V&C, K&C, Ach* **N** and *ByzIl*, but to a lesser degree and with less consistency. In the prologue of *V&C*, the author as narrator addresses his audience and prompts them to "wonder" at the "strangely marvellous plot" he is about to tell (*V&C* 4–5, 24). The Castle of Eros, into which Velthandros finds his way, and its various parts have been made by "art" (245, 332, 376, 447) and by a "craftsman" (249, 289). The young prince is full of wonder and astonishment for the building (292, 313, 316, 337, 446, 450, 454) and praises it openly to Eros himself (523). The narrator twice expresses his own incapacity at describing what Velthandros was seeing (320, 367), two of the very few instances of direct authorial intervention in the narrative. While Velthandros is walking in the Castle's garden, he sees two statues. The inscriptions placed next to them reveal that the statues represent, in a highly symbolic manner, the protagonist couple; Velthandros is moved by the strange beauty and the symbolic meaning of the images, realizing that they foretell his amorous fate (366–441). This passage is the closest we get to a representation of the effect of art on its recipient. Yet all of this imagery in the opening section of the romance does not fully add up to a consistent

[58] On all of these passages and the competitive attitude of writers to painters, see Mitsi-Agapitos 1990–91.

poetological meaning. It is quite probable that the surviving text of the romance represents a shortened version where the most obvious rhetorical characteristics have been removed to produce a swifter, less medieval, narrative (Agapitos 1991, 68–70, 149–154, 167–170, 183–186, 196–199); this could also explain the somewhat erratic appearance of the poetological imagery. The vocabulary describing the process of narration as oral is quite prominent in the romance (Agapitos 1991, 50–51, 57). The prologue is in this respect emblematic, since the author sets up a situation of performance during which his audience (*V&C* 1: ὦ νέοι πάντες)[59] will listen to what he has to say (*V&C* 23: ν' ἀκούσητε τὸν λόγον). It is difficult to decide whether this fictitious audience setting was intended to function within a performative situation of actual recitation, as in *L&R*, or if the audience setting here already reflects a literary convention (Cupane 1995a; Moennig 2004, 113–115); on account of the "oral" vocabulary, I would tend towards the first hypothesis.

In *K&C* the situation is somewhat different, because in this romance the process of narration is systematically described as an act of writing (Agapitos 1991, 48–50); the exact reference of the author back to his own prologue (*K&C* 843–844) is not the type of authorial intervention expected to function in a recited discourse. Astonishment and art do play here a more prominent role, though less so than in *L&R*. The protagonist wonders at all the strange things he sees outside and inside the Castle of the Ogre (*K&C* 155, 174, 195, 205, 209, 324, 356, 789), while the role of a craftsman as creator of the castle's bath is extolled (300, 317, 320). The scene, in particular, where Kallimachos enters the Ogre's Room, finds Chrysorrhoe dangling by her hair under the painted vault of a golden dome and remains petrified by the effect (416–469) presents in concentrated form the poetological imagery analysed so far. In fact, the author intervenes himself and exclaims that he wonders how the vault representing the sky must have been painted through "ingenious artifice and strangely marvellous art" (424–425: θαυμάζω πῶς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τοὺς ἀστέρων δρόμους | μετὰ πανσόφου μηχανῆς καὶ τέχνης παραξένου). The author had already made a similar statement at 320 (he wondered at the cornice of the bath) and will offer another two extended interventions in the erotic bath scene (771–774, 787–791; Agapitos 1990). Here we are faced with a poet who assumes the role of the craftsman and openly praises his own work.

[59] A textual problem presents itself here, since the manuscript unquestionably reads ὡραῖοι πάντες, a fact pointed out by Adolph Ellissen in 1862 and Emile Legrand in 1880. The latter introduced the emendation ὦ νέοι, which has been silently accepted ever since, until it was doubted by Egea 1998, 141–142. The issue is of some importance, since it does affect the "character" of the author's fictional audience.

It is a step further in authorial presence than the "hidden" painter craftsman of *L&R*.

The imagery of astonishment is also found in the two fourteenth-century allegorical poems. In the *Consolatory Fable*, which, as I have indicated above in section III, makes extensive use of *L&R* **α**, the attribute παράξενος is applied to various buildings, pictures, allegorical figures, voices and plants (*LogPar* **L** 140, 144, 190, 201, 418, 421, 519, 714), while the verb ἐκθαυμάζω is used for the effect of the Castle of Bad Fortune on the Stranger (509). However, the vocabulary looks more like an imitative echo of the complex imagery in *L&R*, than a consistent concept adopted by the anonymous poet.[60] In Meliteniotes' *Verses on Chastity* the imagery is employed in a more consistent manner. For example, in the opening section of the poem, once the Stranger begins to tell of his meeting with Chastity, the vocabulary of astonishment, connected to the wonders the narrator sees, prevails emphatically (*Sophr* 79, 85, 93, 100, 106, 117, 204), while the art of the various buildings and the pleasure these buildings evoke is pointed out (93, 94, 115–116, 200, 204). Moreover, the verbs θαυμάζω, ὑμνῶ ("praise") and φημίζω ("extoll") are used five times in the poem's prologue to characterize the admiration effected on credulous people by the fabulistic animal stories of Aesop (3–14) and of the scoundrel jackals *Stephanites and Ichnelates*—the Byzantine adaptation of the Arabic *Kalilah wa Dimnah* (15–17 and 18–21)—as well as by ancient mythological narratives on the lives of humans (22–25). This false effect is contrasted with the poet's "splendid and utterly truthful narrative" (31: ἀλλὰ λαμπρὰ διήγησις καὶ παναληθεστάτη).

As we have seen, *Ach* **N** does not employ the clearly signalled opening section up to the union of the lovers as do *L&R, V&C* and *K&C*, because it mixes the biographic with the erotic plot and, as a result, deviates from the "canon" of *erotike diegesis*. Except in one instance, where Achilles admires the garden of the girl (*Ach* **N** 1324: ὁ Αχιλλεὺς ἐθαύμαζεν τὰς χάριτας τοῦ κήπου), the sense of astonishment has been removed from his gaze and has been transferred to him and to his companions as objects of admiration by means of the formulaic attribute "wondrous" (θαυμαστός: 111, 119, 140, 163, 174, 190, 224, 241 and *passim*). The figure of the craftsman appears only once in the description of the golden plane-tree with its mechanical birds (792–821), where the author-narrator wonders at the craftsman (799: τὸν νοῦν θαυμάζω, ἐξαπορῶ ἐκεῖνον τὸν τεχνίτην). The high number of authorial interventions and interjections accentuates the presence of the narrator in his

[60] Obviously, this picture may also be the result of the poem's transmission; despite the survival of two codices (**L** and **O**), the text presents numerous problems, such as completely incomprehensible passages, glaring inconsistencies and various lacunae.

story (80–81, 109–110, 192, 763–769, 834–836, 851–852), though all of these authorial statements reflect only the rhetorical device of the narrator's "incapacity" to describe what, in fact, he is about to describe (Agapitos 1991, 86–87; Agapitos 1993b, 127).

The situation in *ByzIl* is fairly similar. The imagery of astonishment has been transferred to people and objects (*thaumastos*: 4, 10, 54, 107–108, 217, 322, 339, 392), while *paraxenos* and *xenizomai* refer both to people and to their deeds (14, 74, 149, 217–222). A reminiscence of the effect of art appears in the description of Priam's throne and palace (54–64), where an unspecified person has "set up" the speaking statues adorning the palace (64: φωνὲς ἔστησε, ὡς σαρκὸς νὰ ἔλεγες ὅτ' ἦταν).[61] The phrase "awe-inspiring mystery" is used to characterize Priam's terrible dream foretelling the role of Paris in the tragic fate of Troy (73: τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ φρικτοῦ τῆς φαντασίας ἐκείνης) and filling the magnates and the philosophers at the king's court with astonishment and wonder (74–75), but also to describe the vanity of the world and the power of death (1067, 1156). The narrator in *ByzIl* makes his presence strongly felt by using marked authorial interventions (e.g. 11–13, 50, 127–128, 179–183). In some of these the narrator, while presenting his narrative consistently as a written text,[62] refers specifically back to already narrated events and warns the reader to remember what has been told[63] or to "listen" in astonishment to what has been written.[64]

The marked appearance of the author as narrator in the *Byzantine Iliad* and in redaction **N** of the *Achilleid* could be seen as a specific trait of the biographical-mythological *archai*, far more prominently accentuated that in the historical-fictional *erotikai diegeseis*. However that may be, the somewhat inconsistent presence and partly transferred function of the imagery of

[61] The whole passage is problematic; in v. 64 there is no subject to the verb. It is highly probable that the text of the romance as transmitted in the *codex unicus* has undergone shortening and redaction, with the result that it resembles an unhomogeneous patchwork, in parts detailed and well-structured, in parts brief and disordered, a situation not dissimilar to the surviving text of *V&C*.

[62] *ByzIl* 453–460 (πολυγραφῶ, γράφω, γραφή), 490–496 (γράφω, προγράφω), 586 (προγράφω), 887–888 (γράφω), 950 (λεπτογραφῶ), 1054–1055 (γράφω, λεπτογραφῶ), 1061 (γράφω).

[63] *ByzIl* 461–462 (ἔχε τὸν νοῦ σου, ἐνθυμοῦ τούτου τοῦ τέλους λόγου | καὶ πάλιν νὰ μετέλθωμεν εἰς τοῦτον μας τὸν λόγον) + 580 (ἂς ἔλθω εἰς ἀφήγησι τοῦ πρώτου μας τοῦ λόγου); this, like the opening of the second part in *K&C* (841–846), is one of the rare instances in the romances where temporal simultaneity is employed and signalled in the text (Agapitos 1991, 227–228).

[64] *ByzIl* 490 (ἔγραψα, ἐπροέγραψα καὶ πάλι λέγω τοῦτο), 1110–1111 (καὶ ἄκουσον θέαμα φρικτόν, ἀπόρρητον, μεγάλον | ὥσπερ ἐπροεγράψαμε, ὁ νοῦς σου νὰ θαυμάσῃ).

astonishment in *LogPar, Sophr, Ach* **N** and *ByzIl* suggests that by the middle of the fourteenth century the poetological concept of the "awe-inspiring mystery" expressed in *L&R* had become part and parcel of a stereotyped poetic idiom; in other words, this concept no longer represents an inner operative principle of a given text, but an acquired literary convention.[65] The poetological imagery decreases even further in the remaining three romances;[66] this could be a further indication of the changing social and educational context of the poets and their audiences, who did not fully partake in the ideological and artistic codes of Byzantine culture.

We noted above the brief appearance of the interpreter of art in *L&R*, who is called upon to explain to the protagonist the perplexing image of three-faced Eros and to teach him about what he sees (**α** 494–497 / **N** 306–309). The use of the verbs ἑρμηνεύω ("interpret") and ἀναδιδάσκω ("instruct") in this crucial passage signals, in my opinion, a specific function of the narrative; it is not just a story to be told but, even more so, a lesson to be learned (on Eros and *didache* in Hellenistic and Byzantine learned literature see Agapitos 1991, 54–55). The importance of exegetic instruction in this scene concerning the nature of Eros reappears two more times in the romance's first chapter. During his second dream, Livistros meets Eros in his marvellous garden; the young king, while referring to the three-faced ruler, interrupts his narration and tells his friend that he forgot something and that Klitovon should remind him about it (**α** 716–718 / **P** 391–393: ῎Εναν πρᾶγμα μὲ ἔλαθεν, φίλε μου, παροπίσω, | τὸ νὰ σὲ ἀφηγήσομαι καὶ πάλιν ἐνθύμισέ το | καὶ ἀφοῦ πληρώσω τὸ ὄνειρον, νὰ σὲ εἴπω τὸ τί εἶδον).[67] Once Livistros has moved on with his story and has told Klitovon how he found Silvercastle, the seat of Rhodamne's father, and how he saw Eros in a third dream, the Armenian prince interrupts the narrative, refers back to the protagonist's promise and asks for instruction (**α** 917–919 / **N** 713–715: ῞Ας σὲ περικόψω ὀλίγον· | ὁκάτι ὀπίσω σὲ ἔλαθεν τὸ νὰ μὲ θέλῃς εἴπει, | καὶ πάλιν ἐνθυμίζω σε <τὸ> νὰ μὲ ἀναδιδάξῃς). Livistros duly fulfils his promise and proceeds to report the instruction on the nature

[65] A similar phenomenon has been detected by Papanghelis (1994, 173–235) in the transfer of the vocabulary of Callimachean poetics to Rome and its gradual transformation into poetic "catch-words" by the time of Ovid.

[66] *F&P* **L** 386–387, 434 (the evil craft of poisoning), 816, 972, 1316–1317, 1389, 1462, 1762–1763 (Florios' magician mother); *A&S* **B** 88, 455 (a negative image), 861; *I&M* **V** 3, 39, 41–43, 74, 78, 107, 238, 245, 321, 590–591, 622, 765.

[67] This device, where the speaker by pretending to have forgotten something in reality accentuates what he has to say, is a typical convention of Byzantine rhetoric (Agapitos 1989, 303 and n. 85); this is further evidence for the poet's rhetorical education.

of Eros given to him by the prophet in Eros' palace during his first dream (**α** 920–941 / **N** 716–724 + **P** 577–584 + **N** 725–729 referring back to **α** 607–609 / **P** 297–298). The importance of Klitovon's interruption is prominently highlighted by a two-verse rubric preceding the exegesis (**α** 915–916 / **N** 711–712: Ὁ Κλιτοβὼν ἀνερωτᾶ τὸν Λίβιστρον νὰ μάθῃ | διὰ τὰ ὄπισθεν τὰ πρόσωπα τὰ ἐρωτικὰ τὰ τρία). The whole passage is filled with the vocabulary of instruction (μανθάνω, ἀναδιδάσκω, διδάσκω, γνωρίζω, ἐρωτῶ) which, in its turn, is linked to the vocabulary of narration (λέγω, ἀκούω, ἀφηγοῦμαι).

Another section of the romance, where the imagery of instruction in the "Art of Love" (**α** 1237 / **S** 24: ἐρωτοτέχνη) plays an important role, is the long *ekphrasis* of the thirty-six allegorical statues on the ramparts of Silvercastle (**α** 1018–1252 / **N** 801–979 + **S** 1–39; see Cupane 1992, 293–301). Each group of statues—the twelve Virtues of Love, the twelve Months, the twelve Amours—presents the various stages in the process of the "preoccupation with love" (**α** 1201 / **N** 967: ἐρωτικὴ ἀσχόλησις) and constitutes a didactic compendium in lyrical form on how to behave when in love (Cupane 2004). In describing the statues and expounding their allegorical meaning, Livistros assumes the role of teacher in relation to Klitovon (**α** 1199 / **N** 965: καὶ τὸ καθένα, φίλε μου, νὰ σὲ τὸ ἀναδιδάξω) and, vicariously, to the audience of the romance. I have discussed in detail elsewhere the consistent use of the vocabulary of instruction and its meaning in the romance (Agapitos 1991, 59–64), as well as the narrative function of interpretation and instruction in Livistros' first dream (Agapitos 1999). I only wish to point here to the prominent presence of "narration as instruction for cultivated lovers" in the romance's prologue (**α** 1–24 / **N** 1–24) and epilogue (**α** 4587–4601 / **S** 3248–3262), exactly those emblematic passages where the author has hidden himself behind the *persona* of Klitovon as the chief narrating voice.

The poetological imagery of narration as instruction is also found in some of the other romances. It is quite prominent in *K&C*, where it is explicitly connected to the image of seeing the written text and reading it (843–844, 1061–1062, 1325–1326); it is already picked up by the author in the romance's prologue (20–21): ὅμως ἂν ἴδῃς τὴν γραφὴν καὶ τὰ τοῦ στίχου μάθῃς | ἔργοις γνωρίσεις ἔρωτος γλυκόπικρας ὀδύνας ("but if you see the writing and learn the content of the verse, | you will understand through deeds the bittersweet pains of love"). I understand the dative ἔργοις as referring to the action involved in the story. In *V&C*, no explicit reference to the image is made, though the author presents himself as a sort of instructor (23–24, 1342–1348), especially if we accept Legrand's emendation in the first verse of the prologue (see above n. 59). Narration as instruction in the nature of Love plays a crucial role in *Ach* **N**; it is expounded in the romance's

prologue (1–20)[68] and picked up twice by Pandrouklos (312–327, 1122–1124) in criticizing Achilles on his haughty rejection of Eros (Smith 1991–92; Smith 1999, 97–98). The imagery resurfaces with full force in the moralizing concluding section, where the audience should now learn about the vanity of human affairs and of deceptive wordly life (1662–1667, 1740–1742). The epilogue of the romance (1902–1926), after Achilles has been killed in Troy, includes all elements of this poetological imagery: the "tale about Achilles" (1907: διήγησιν τοῦ ᾽Αχιλλέως) has been adapted in a simpler style for instructing uneducated people (1908–1909); the readers of the story (1914: καὶ οἱ ἀναγινώσκοντες τὴν ἱστορίαν ταύτην) should learn about the instability of wordly affairs and the power of death.

A similar imagery is used in *ByzIl* towards the end of the poem (1057–1072), where the narrator explains how he adapted "the book of Homer, the great teacher and wise man of the Hellenes" (1057–1058) in a "flat" style for simple people (1061: εἰς ἰδιῶτας πεδινὰ γράφω τὰ τῆς Τρωάδος) and how his audience should learn about the vanity of the world.[69] The imagery appears in the prologue and epilogue of the *Consolatory Fable* (*LogPar* **L** 14–21, 723–747). It also appears in Meliteniotes' *On Chastity*. At the beginning of the poem, Chastity tells the Stranger that she will instruct him at a later point about her own story (*Sophr* 269–270: ἰδού σοι τὴν διήγησιν εἶπον τῶν προκειμένων, | ὕστερον δὲ τὰ κατ᾽ ἐμὲ διδάξω σε πῶς ἔχουν); here, again, the connection between narration and instruction is explicitly stated.[70] At the end of the poem, the beautiful maiden assumes the role of the teacher instructing the narrator who, in his turn, should instruct people of later generations and particularly young people (2874–2878: καὶ βούλομαι διδάξαι σε τὴν γνῶσιν τῶν ἐνθάδε, | τῶν ἔξωθεν καὶ τῶν ἐντός, φημί, τοῦ παραδείσου, | ὅπως διδάσκαλος φανῇ πολλοῖς τῶν ὀψιγόνων | πρὸς ἀρετὴν τὸ φρόνημα τῶν νέων διεγείρων· | καὶ δή μοι πρόσχες ἀκριβῶς καὶ τὰ βελτίω γνοίης. The long instruction includes expositions about the nature of sin, virtue, death, retribution in Hell and reward in Paradise (2879–3016). The gradual decrease of the image of "narration as instruction" from the middle of the fourteenth century onwards in the

[68] Note, in particular, *Ach* **N** 12 + 14 (ἅπαντες νῦν ἀκούσατε τὴν ἀφήγησιν τὴν ταύτην … νὰ μάθετε δὲ ἅπαντες, νὰ πληροφορηθῆτε) with the direct correlation of narration and instruction.

[69] On the similar passages in *Ach* **N**, *ByzIl* and *Belisarius* **χ**, see Smith 1999, 149–153.

[70] On the phrase τὰ κατ᾽ ἐμὲ as signalling an autoreferential discourse, see Hinterberger 1999, 97–116.

remaining romances[71] is again an indication of the different social and cultural context to which these later poems belong.

But why should narration be related to instruction? We have seen that the imagery of the "awe-inspiring mystery" introduced a notion of aesthetic pleasure in the tales of love. This notion, expressed through the vocabulary of astonishment and delight,[72] presents something new in Byzantine erotic narrative. It is completely absent from Prodromos and Eugeneianos and only makes one appearance in the concluding paragraph of Makrembolites,[73] and this despite the prominence of artistry as something wondrous in all three twelfth-century novels. We have also seen that narration as a signalled concept—be it in the indication of a generic category, be it in the inclusion of action proper in the stories—is one of the most obvious characteristics of the Palaiologan romances. But this is not the case with the "static" Komnenian novels, except again for Makrembolites, where action does play a more prominent role in the passage from the first to the second part of the story (Books 7–8 of *H&H*). However, the notion of narrative as instruction is a prominent characteristic of Byzantine hagiography, where the story of the saint's "life and conduct" is presented as useful, and in some cases even as delightful, for the soul,[74] one further point of contact between romance and hagiography. Usefulness and delight are also combined in the prologues of a number of ecclesiastical and secular historiographical works (Karpozilos 1997, 122–133, 284–297). It seems as if Byzantine society could not accept the enticing power of narration—be it the textual narrative of history or hagiography, be it the visual narrative of religious iconographic cycles—unless it was excused on account of its usefulness.

I would suggest that the "discovery" of narrative as narrated action is an innovation that distinguishes the romances from the novels and their respective audiences. In the socially "closed" *theatra* of Komnenian aristocracy, it is the rhetorically elitist display of *tableau vivants* within "static" *dramata* that holds the day and impresses the highly educated

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[71] It is used only briefly in the moralizing epilogue of *A&S* **B** 1325–1411 (omitted in version **S**).

[72] On the latter see indicatively: *L&R* **α** 210 / **N** 196 (ἐπιτέρπομαι), **α** 2559 / **S** 1293 (τερπνότητα); *V&C* 122 (χαριτωμένος), 321 (χάρις); *K&C* 7 (τερπνόν), 12 (χαρὰ ἐνήδονος, τέρψις), 155 (ἡδονή), 183 (πάντερπνος), 774 (ἡδονή); *Ach* **N** 770 (πάντρεπνος [sic]), **N** 825 (τερπνότατον); *Sophr* 49 (ἡδονή), 62 (θέλγω), 93 (τερπνός).

[73] *H&H* 11.23 with the use of the verbs καταχαριτόω, κατακοσμῶ, κατακαλλύνω.

[74] For the appearance of *hedone* in hagiography, I refer indicatively to the prologues of the Lives of John the Merciful by Leontios of Neapolis (ed. A. Festugiére), of Patriarch Nikephoros by Ignatios the Deacon (ed. C. de Boor) and of Andreas Salos (ed. L. Rydén).

audience, a technique not unsimilar to the "episodic" structure of the four satirical poems of *Ptochoprodromos* or to the "compartmentalized" representations of the Passion of Christ in the religious foundations of that same Komnenian aristocracy, such as the mosaics in Daphni outside Athens or the frescoes in Asinou of Cyprus and Pherrai of Thrace (late eleventh, early twelfth and mid-twelfth centuries, respectively). In this Komnenian context of authoritative representation, narrative as action is cancelled and, thus, any notion of excuse is *a priori* excluded. Narration needs not to instruct, because it does not narrate, but only displays, even if it does so in the most astonishing manner, as in the *Chronography* of Michael Psellos or the *Alexiad* of Anna Komnene. Once narrative as action becomes the real stake of the story from the thirteenth century onwards (and it is here that the romance-like redaction **G** of *Digenis Akritis* also belongs), instruction is introduced; under its cover the inclusion of new subjects, such as the predominant role of the female protagonist, sex and death, is fully explored. And it is this cultural opening of Laskarid and early Palaiologan society that also allowed for narrative as action to take over historiography (the *History* of Georgios Akropolites is an excellent example) or to infuse the iconographic cycles of such religious foundations as Theodoros Metochites' Monastery of the Chora (inaugurated in Easter 1321): the original building of the Komnenian founders is respectfully preserved and renovated with splendid but "compartmentalized" mosaics, while the newly built funerary chapel for the powerful minister and his family is adorned with innovative frescoes daringly narrating the path of man through death to a new life.

VI. *Concluding thoughts*

At this point it will be necessary to summarize the main conclusions of the foregoing analysis, although I am very much aware that this will raise more questions than I can answer.

The discussion of genre and structure showed that readers in Late Byzantium did recognize a specific type of love story as a generic category and that this love story was related to the twelfth-century novels. On the one hand, the position of *Livistros and Rhodamne* between the two groups, the common rhetorical devices and the parallel manuscript transmission connect the two groups; on the other, the differences in language, subject matter and approach to narration distinguish them. I would therefore suggest that both groups belong to the broader *kind* (in Alastair Fowler's terminology) of erotic narrative, to which also the Hellenistic novels and other ancient erotic narrations belong. However, the two Byzantine groups form, in my opinion, two genres: the *erotic drama* of the Komnenian era focusing primarily on

narrated representation and the *erotic tale* of the Laskarid-Palaiologan era focusing primarily on narrated action. The vernacular erotic tale is in itself divided into two subgenres: the "tale of love" (ἐρωτικὴ διήγησις) concentrating equally on the protagonist couple and the "love story" (ἀρχή) of the male protagonist incorporating stereotypical plot elements of the hero's biography. Just as the Komnenian novels were created by their authors in an intertextual dialogue with their Hellenistic predecessors, so were the Palaiologan tales of love created in a similar process with their Komnenian predecessors. But whereas the large historical distance between the Hellenistic and the Komnenian novels has been ingeniously disguised through mimesis and authority, this is not the case with the relation of the vernacular romances to their learned counterparts; the small historical distance between the two groups has been immensely accentuated by deviating innovation.

And this innovation needs to be explained. It could be seen, for example, as the socio-cultural result of a simultaneously progressive and regressive attitude of Orthodox Byzantine society towards its new Islamic and Catholic neighbours, an attitude dictated in different ways by the shock of 1204 and the loss of Constantinople. Thus, in contrast to the still universalist claims of Komnenian aristocracy and a more or less stable image of the world, Laskarid and Palaiologan Byzantium could not even externally sustain such claims. The disaster of 1204 left large cracks in the idealized *Weltbild* and this led to a widening of the social, political, ideological and artistic rifts that had already appeared in twelfth-century society. Literary production in Late Byzantium reflects very clearly, I think, these tensions. Learned literature became even more manneristic (the development of stylistic obscurity from Theodoros Laskaris via Nikephoros Blemmydes to Theodoros Metochites is quite extraordinary), while various attempts coming from different directions were made to restrain this mannerism (Demetrios Kydones and his almost Petrarchan vision of "Attic purity" in the late fourteenth century represents one such direction); theological writing, profoundly self-involved but highly political, grew out of proportion in the great monastic centres flourishing outside the imperial domains; translation emerges as a new type of "useful" writing, be it intralinguistic transposition (Anna Komnene, Niketas Choniates and Nikephoros Blemmydes are transferred to a simpler style) or interlinguistic translation from Latin (Cicero, Augustine, Boethius and Ovid are among the authors translated); vernacular production in various genres expands rapidly, initially in verse, but gradually also in prose. This situation of stylistic extremes and thematic variety reflects, in my opinion, the weakening of central control, the steady presence of foreign cultures in Byzantine lands, and the rise of various peripheries as new and active centres of politics and commerce.

It is this historical process that the production of romances in Late Byzantium follows, capturing the confluence of different and sometimes conflicting tastes through the inclusion of Western and Eastern elements in their narratives. Initially composed to be recited in front of an aristocratic audience at Laskarid Nicaea that wished to recapture the past by recapturing Constantinople, the romances spread to the court of Andronikos II Palaiologos who was patron to literary and political personalities (e.g. Maximos Planoudes, Nikephoros Choumnos, Theodoros Metochites) *and* cousin of an author of a tale of love. Around the middle of the fourteenth century, the romances catered to the needs of a new aristocracy who wished to idealize its tenuous political claims in a time of civil strife and economic uncertainty, an idealization reflected, in my opinion, in the wonder-tale utopia of *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* and the heroic-aristocratic world of the *Achilleid*. Seen in this perspective, the notion of "Volksliteratur" as far as the romances are concerned has to be rejected.

The success of the romances as books to be read supported their gradual move to the new centres. The comparative analysis of the various redactions and versions of each individual text revealed to us the changes in perceptions of genre, structure and poetics in changing social contexts, from a thirteenth-century princely court to a fifteenth-century urban milieu. At the same time, this move also ensured the opening of the genre to different types of narrative. One such case is the appearance of the mythological-biographical *archai* whose form is governed by generic mixture: elements of the heroic tradition in representing the protagonist's birth, growth and death (as reflected in *Digenis Akritis* **E** and **G**, and discreetly used in the opening of *Velthandros and Chrysantza*) are combined with the conventions of the *erotike diegesis* (letters, songs, descriptions, poetological imagery) to create a love story with tragic connotations, something new in Byzantine erotic narrative. Another case is the adaptation of Western and Eastern tales of love in the second half of the fourteenth century. It is an impressive process of creative reworking, already prepared by the acceptance of Western and Eastern modes of narration (the *avanture-amour* concept or the encased narrative) in the thirteenth century, paralleled by the growing translation activity in the context of learned literature during the fourteenth century, and fostered by the distance from the Constantinopolitan centre.

The analysis of poetics in the romances helped us to recognize that specific poetological concepts, such as art as a mystery and narrative as instruction, were applied by the authors of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries in a consistent and conscious way. Moreover, these concepts link the romances to other genres of Byzantine literature from the learned domain. We also noticed that the romances developed a stereotyped poetic discourse that was

used by other authors working in different genres and different linguistic idioms (e.g. the vernacular *Consolatory Fable* and the learned *On Chastity*), and that this discourse became an instrument in the formulaic composition of other vernacular narratives, such as the fourteenth century *War of Troy*. Whether this stereotyped discourse reflects an oral tradition in Byzantine vernacular poetry, as has been argued over the past thirty years (Jeffreys 1973, Jeffreys-Jeffreys 1986, Eideneier 1999), I am not able to say, though I would tend to view such formulas as part of a "cut-and-paste" technique within conventional narrative (see also Cupane 2003), similar to formulas we find in Byzantine hagiography, a "popular" genre created primarily to be recited in front of an audience, but not forming part of any oral tradition.

Be that as it may, the poetological imagery and the stereotyped discourse of the romances became an important cultural convention in Late Byzantine poetry, but also played a formative part in the passage of literary production from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. For example, it can be detected in the work of a poet who lived outside the dominions of the Palaiologan Empire and who is usually not associated with the tales of love. The fourteenth-century Cretan landowner and lawyer Stephanos Sachlikes is an early version of François Villon and a major poetic figure in Late Medieval, Venetian-dominated, Crete (van Gemert 1997). In an "autobiographical" poem, Sachlikes used devices that bring to mind the poetological concepts of the romances. For one thing, the poem bears the heading *The Strangely Marvellous Tale of Humble Sachlikes* (Papadimitriou 1896, 15: Ἀφήγησις παράξενος τοῦ ταπεινοῦ Σαχλίκη), echoing exactly the headings of the *erotikai diegeseis* (see above section III, nrs. 2, 5, 8). Within the literary frame of a fictitious autobiographical discourse (Hinterberger 1998), the author-narrator-protagonist writes a love-song (*AphPar* 27: καταλόγι) in the form of a lament (28: μοιρολόγι) about his sorrows caused by evil Fate (21–26). Instead of being educated in school by his teacher, he decides at the age of fourteen to educate himself in the pleasures of music, food and sex (30–76); instead of suffering for his one chosen love, he is ruined on account of his escapades with numerous whores and is finally imprisoned because of his promiscuous and financially disastrous affair with a lecherous widow housed in a brothel (97–112). Thus, the author's *persona* becomes a bourgeois antihero, the exact reversal of the aristocratic hero in the romances.

The consistent use of the poetological vocabulary,[75] the appearance of

[75] For example, the verb ὀρέγομαι is used to characterize both the "appetite" of the readers to learn about the protagonist's sufferings (*AphPar* 25) and the "appetite" of the protagonist himself for the pleasures of the flesh (57, 75, 97).

generic categories pertaining to the tales of love[76] and the presentation of the narrator's "tale" as an inverted instruction for his audience (25: λοιπόν, ὅποιος ὀρέγεται νὰ μάθῃ διὰ τὴν μοίραν)[77] suggest that Sachlikes knew and exploited in a subversive way the conventions of "erotic narrative". There can be no doubt that the older romances were read in Late Medieval Crete. We know that the Cretan poet Leonardos Dellaportas used redaction **α** of *L&R* extensively in a lengthy allegorical poem of his composed in the first decade of the fifteenth century (Manoussacas 1994; Agapitos 2004d, ch. IV.1.3 and V.2.1); we also know that redaction **E** of *L&R* was prepared in Crete in the late fourteenth century, while it is very probable that *K&C* was also read in Crete during the fifteenth century (Agapitos 2004d, ch. V.2.4 and V.4).

We are still far removed from having fully grasped learned and vernacular literary production in Late Byzantium. However, I hope to have shown that in the case of the romances, with the application of different methods, the combination of historical and literary approaches, and a multifocal comparatist perspective, a better understanding of the poetic achievement of the anonymous authors of the Byzantine tales of love within their socio-cultural context can be reached; and this greatly enriches our knowledge of a large, but often neglected, part in the literary history of European culture.

Department of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies
University of Cyprus

COMMENTS

CAROLINA CUPANE

Gli studi sulla narrativa d'amore del Medioevo bizantino hanno vissuto una sorta di esplosione nell'ultimo decennio, l'interesse degli studiosi si è volto però principalmente alla rinascita del genere nel XII s. (dopo quasi otto secoli di silenzio) alla corte degli imperatori Comneni. A queste creazioni altamente retoriche di autori ben noti nella storia delle lettere bizantine dell'epoca, tutte leggibili in moderne edizioni (Conca 1990, Marcovich 1992 e 2001) e traduzioni in svariate lingue straniere (Conca 1994, Plepelits 1989 e 1992, Meunier 1991), è stato dedicato sullo scorcio del nuovo millennio un

[76] *Aphegesis* in the title, but also *katalogi* and *moirologi* in the prologue; the last two are specific terms of included genres in the romances (Agapitos 1991, 205–217).

[77] See also the direct antithesis between the school and the brothel as the school of whores (*AphPar* 32–36 [σκολεῖον] ≈ 59–60 [σκολεῖον τῶν πολιτικῶν]); in this latter school the poet becomes a master eager to instruct others (61–66), another grotesque inversion of the "narration-as-instruction" *topos*.

Simposio internazionale (Reinsch-Agapitos 2000), che ha definitivamente consacrato lo statuto scientifico e letterario di questi testi. I rappresentanti in lingua volgare della tradizione narrativa in lingua greca non hanno invece incontrato un simile favore, situati come sono, tanto per livello linguistico quanto per il tono inconsueto e le tematiche "diverse" in una terra di nessuno fra Bisanzio e la Grecia moderna. È perciò particolarmente lodevole l'iniziativa delle Symbolae Osloenses di porre al centro della discussione scientifica proprio i romanzi in lingua volgare recuperando a tal modo l'indiscutibile unitarietà della narrativa bizantina di finzione.

Lo studio di Panagiotis Agapitos, che fornisce la base alla presente discussione, è un appassionato plaidoyer di tale unitarietà, la quale si articola, com'è ovvio, in convergenze e divergenze. Esse vengono da lui illustrate in modo pertinente sulla base di tre categorie critiche, genere, struttura e poetica. Dati gli stretti limiti di spazio posti dagli editori, mi limiterò ad alcune osservazioni specifiche in merito allo spinoso problema del genere e della eventuale consapevolezza di esso da parte dei produttori e consumatori primari quale essa si manifesta nelle parti autoreferenziali dei testi e/o nei paratesti che li accompagnano nella loro forma manoscritta.

Agapitos interpreta a ragione i termini διήγησις ed ἐρωτικός come segni di una sia pur rudimentale percezione dello statuto generico di una serie di testi. Particolarmente illuminante a questo proposito gli sembra, a ragione, la testimonianza offerta dal poema allegorico di Meliteniota—la quale è per inciso interna al testo—che al tempo stesso segnala appartenenza e differenziazione: si tratta di una narrazione erotica, ma casta, presenta cioè tutto l'apparato stilistico tipico del romanzo d'amore non però la tematica. La percezione del copista del codice unico della fine del XIV s. conferma sostanzialmente la definizione autoriale e la specifica col ridimensionare (a buon diritto) l'elemento erotico e il segnalare esplicitamente la dimensione allegorica del racconto. Si noterà che il passaggio dal paratesto al testo è esplicitamente marcato: con ἀρχὴ τῆς διηγήσεως il copista e primo editore del testo lascia la parola all'autore. Ciò mi porta alla principale perplessità nei confronti della terminologia "generica" proposta da Agapitos.

Se si può infatti asserire che la *diegesis erotike* fosse intesa dai Bizantini stessi come una categoria di testi con connotati specifici che la distinguevano da *diegeseis* di altro tipo e che questa consapevolezza si sia cristallizzata nel tempo, come dimostra l'uso costante di questo titolo nella tradizione manoscritta seriore, non mi convince altrettanto la scelta di ἀρχή quale definizione generica per una categoria a se stante di testi riconosciuta come tali. Le opere che portano il termine nell'*intitulatio* presentano, è vero, caratteristiche peculiari, esse seguono infatti lo schema biografico tipico dell'epica, riferiscono, contrariamente alle *diegeseis erotikai*, la nascita, la

crescita e gli ἄθλα dell'eroe eponimo e si concludono solitamente con la sua morte. Non in tutte le opere così strutturate ricorre però il termine ἀρχή· il romanzo di Alessandro bizantino in decapentasillabi (Reichmann 1963), l'archetipo di tutte le narrazioni "biografiche" in volgare è intitolato infatti διήγησις ἱστορική. Si registrerà inoltre che alcune di queste opere (ma non *Imberio*, ad esempio) tematizzano la materia epica tradizionale, vale a dire la materia troiana, ancorché la distanza da Omero sia per lo più notevole. Tutte queste caratteristiche prese insieme, come ha ben visto Agapitos, permettono sì di individuare un sottogruppo nella più ampia categoria delle *diegeseis* in volgare, che veniva differenziato, almeno tendenzialmente, anche nel titolo. Questo però, a mio avviso, non era *arche*—il che non avrebbe molto senso—ma piuttosto quello adoperato nella sempre viva tradizione epica per i testi troiani, dunque *Troas* nel caso dell'*Iliade bizantina* e della *Guerra di Troia*,[78] o quello dell'eroe eponimo in quelli in cui gli agganci troiani erano, per quanto presenti, meno marcati (*Achilleide* **N**). Non a caso il redattore dell'*Achilleide* **O**, la quale non conserva alcuna memoria del destino troiano del suo eroe, ritorna alla terminologia usuale *diegesis*, senza neanche curarsi di caratterizzare la storia con un aggettivo così come fa quello della *Storia di Apollonio* (Cupane 1995c, 582), della quale però egli afferma esplicitamente trattarsi di una trasposizione da lingua straniera: μεταγλώττισμα ἀπὸ λατινικόν.

Unica eccezione a questa "regola" è *Imberio*, che non può essere considerato un testo troiano. Può darsi che l'impianto biografico-"storico" dell'inizio della vicenda, simile a quello dell'*Achilleide* (che peraltro lo precede nel manoscritto napoletano) giustifichi il titolo *Imberios* al posto del più diffuso *diegesis erotike* in questa versione, come afferma Agapitos. Che esso comunque debba essere ὁ Ἰμπέριος e non ἀρχή è dimostrato dall'*intitulatio* e dalla *conclusio* della redazione viennese, sulla quale le osservazioni di Agapitos, fondate sull'edizione di Kriaras, sono inesatte e incomplete. Anche il manoscritto vindobonense offre infatti, accanto al titolo riportato dall'editore: διήγησις ἐξαίρετος ἐρωτικὴ καὶ ξένη τοῦ Ἰμπερίου θαυμαστοῦ …, anche la soprascrizione in inchiostro rosso ἀρχὴ τοῦ Ἰμπερίου, mentre alla fine del sommario (v. 15) un'altra "*arche*"-rubrica segnala l'inizio della vicenda: ἀρχὴ τῆς διηγήσεως τῆς χώρας τῆς Πρεβέντζας. La conclusione del testo infine è marcata esplicitamente dallo scriba con la notazione: τέλος τοῦ Ἰμπερίου. Era questo dunque, secondo il parere del copista agli inizi del XVI s., il titolo dell'opera.

[78] Si osserverà che anche in questi casi la terminologia è oscillante, l'*Iliade bizantina*, come osserva anche Agapitos, conosce, accanto al titolo *Troas* anche quello di *diegesis* (γεναμένη ἐν Τροίᾳ come attributo caratterizzante), mentre la *Guerra di Troia* è intitolata in uno dei manoscritti ἱστορικὴ ἐξήγησις.

Summa summarum si può affermare che una definizione tecnica in realtà non esiste. Tuttalpiù si può riscontrare una certa tendenza a designare alcune storie, quelle appunto in cui il ruolo del protagonista maschile era, come nell'epica, dominante (ma non soltanto quelle), con il nome dell'eroe eponimo. Questo uso è peraltro attestato anche in relazione ai romanzi tardoantichi: sappiamo infatti che i romanzi di Eliodoro e Achille Tazio, nonché quello di Caritone, venivano indicati frequentemente col nome della protagonista femminile, Cariclea, Leucippe, Calliroe (e. g. Dyck 1986, 90). Tutti i testi invece, indipendentemente dal contenuto, sono διηγήσεις, una definizione questa del tutto vaga che si limita a rilevarne il generale carattere narrativo, accompagnata di solito, ma non sempre, da un aggettivo che ne illustra la caratteristica tematica dominante. Questa prassi non è caratteristica esclusiva della letteratura erotica in volgare. Numerose Vite agiografiche, ad esempio, vengono denominate διήγησις (διήγημα, βιβλίον, ἱστορία) ψυχωφελής, la *Belisariada*, a secondo dei codici, è una διήγησις ὡραιοτάτη o ἱστορική, mentre per la tarda recenzione in prosa gli scribi preferiscono il meno impegnativo πανεξαίρετος; la *Storia dei quadrupedi* è, com'è noto, una *diegesis* πεζόφραστος e infine, per lasciare il campo specifico della letteratura in volgare, svariate opere storiografiche, *pars pro toto* la monumentale opera di Niceta Coniata, sono χρονικαὶ διηγήσεις.

Quanto detto finora si riferisce esclusivamente alle definizioni offerte dai paratesti, vale a dire le rubriche, fanno parte dunque della *mise en libre* dei romanzi in volgare che per noi diviene tangibile per lo più in epoca postbizantina.[79] Negli interventi metanarrativi autoreferenziali, quando ve ne sono, i testi invece non differenziano in alcun modo e si autodefiniscono in maniera costante come διήγησις, ἀφήγησις (*Achilleide* **N** 11, *Imberio* **V** e **N** 4), διήγημα (*Iliade bizantina* 1), λόγος (*Beltandro* 2), ὑπόθεσις (*Beltandro* 3), più raramente ἱστορία (*Achilleide* **N**1810) o γραφή/στίχος (*Callimaco* 20), mai però come ἀρχή. Quest'ultimo comunque è un termine che ricorre in tutte le opere, indipendentemente dalla supposta categoria di appartenenza. La maggioranza degli autori e/o editori ama infatti marcare in apposite rubriche

[79] Il problema delle rubriche meriterebbe una trattazione a parte e va considerata nel contesto più ampio e interdisciplinare del libro medievale in volgare. Mi limito qui ad accennare soltanto che titoli e rubriche non sono caratteristica esclusiva dei romanzi greci medievali, come afferma Agapitos, ma si trovano in gran numero anche nei testi romanzeschi in lingua d'oil e in medio-alto tedesco (Palmer 1989, 72–76). Ferma restando la loro importanza specialmente in riferimento ad un epoca, come quella medievale, in cui i concetti stessi di autore ed opera differiscono radicalmente da quelli moderni (Bumke 1997, 110–114) la questione dell' "originarietà" e antichità andrebbe comunque discussa caso per caso e non può essere assunta globalmente.

(e più raramente nel corpo del testo) l'inizio, ἀρχή, della storia—*Callimaco*, 2 e 24, rispettivamente all'inizio del prologo e della *narratio, Achilleide* 1 e 19a rispettivamente all'inizio del prologo e della *narratio, Libistro* **α** 27, all'inizio della *narratio*, una ripresa dell'intervento autoriale al v. 25), *Imberio* **V** e **N** 3, 8, 15, in entrambi i casi ad apertura e conclusione del prologo/sommario e ancora una volta all'inizio della *narratio* vera e propria, *Iliade bizantina* 1 e 2 in forma verbale: ἄρξομαι. È questa peraltro una prassi funzionale a quella oralità fittiva che caratterizza lo stile narrativo dei romanzi in volgare, e sottolineo oralità fittiva, poiché nulla ci autorizza, io credo, a postulare—come fa Agapitos—un'evoluzione da un'originaria destinazione alla performance (*Libistro*) ad una esclusiva intenzione di lettura (*Callimaco*). Basta osservare, ad esempio, con quale raffinatezza la redazione napoletana dell'*Achilleide*, che secondo la tavola cronologica proposta da Agapitos è pressocché contemporanea a quest'ultimo, si situi fra i due poli della ricezione aurale (prologo) e della lettura a scopo d'istruzione (epilogo), abolendo a tal modo la polarizzazione stessa (Cupane 1995a).

Universität Wien
Institut für Byzantinistik und Neogräzistik

MARTIN HINTERBERGER

Panagiotis Agapitos discusses in detail the only three critical statements concerning erotic tales that we know so far, and it is clear that these statements are important for our understanding of Byzantine romance. To each of these three passages let me add some minor remarks: (1) What Philes says in line 17 of his epigram should, in my opinion, be interpreted, as follows: "… even if the book looks at the surface like (or: appears / gives the impression to be) a love story (it is not and it should not be read as such)". I think that this interpretation of ἐμφάσεις ἔρωτος is more in tune with the ancient and medieval use of the word ἔμφασις and also fits better in the context as well as the general interpretation of the poem as suggested by A. (2) According to the title of Meliteniotes' poem, the text on Chastity contains, apart from "some erotic narratives", also "some narratives to be understood by elevation (to a higher level)", the word ἀναγωγή being the technical term for the exegetical transfer from the literal meaning to a higher one, normally applied to a theological text. The title thus announces the many moralistic and didactic allegorical *exegeseis,* achieved by the way of *anagoge*, which is the very subject of this poem. (3) From a grammatical and syntactical point of view the colophon at the end of the *Consolatory Fable* is highly problematic, which renders the interpretation of the text rather

difficult, if not impossible. I am therefore aware that what I am going to suggest is arbitrary speculation, and partly based on my imagination. When I read the verses in question in A.'s report, I was particularly puzzled by two points. In these passages I would suggest an interpretation slightly different from the one proposed by A. In the consecutive verses 753–754, I tripped over the position of πόθου and over the meaning of ἀνερωτόληπτος. In the political verse, normally, the caesura after the 8th syllable must not divide words which form a close syntactical unit, e.g. a genitive depending from a noun. But the latter would be the case if we follow the punctuation as it is in A.'s article (and Cupane's edition). Being used to late Byzantine political verse, I therefore was tempted to stop after the word ἀνεπιτήδευτος and to read πόθου together with δίχως φουδούλαν, which makes "(the story) is however without care (or: artless), (because there is) a girl without desire".[80] The same notion is expressed by ἀνερωτόληπτος, namely the contrary of someone who is taken by love, and consequently I would translate v. 754 as "the whole story is about love and someone not taken by love". If I am right, the scribe of λ interpreted the *Consolatory Fable* as a love story, but as one in which the girl does not respond to the man's love. That means that the scribe, probably influenced by his former perusal of *L&R*, supposed that behind all the fuzzy talk about lost happiness a sad love story is hidden, a story of "unknown and hidden yearning". The same unhappiness struck Libistros in the beginning of *L&R*, and tortured him until Rhodamne yielded to his wooing. Here, one has to stress again that the anonymous commentary on the *Consolatory Fable* not only uses the key word φουδούλα, which we also find in *L&R*, but generally draws on the vocabulary of *L&R* as the words ἀνεγνώριστος and κρεμασμός show. My interpretation does not contradict A., but, on the contrary, corroborates his suggestion that the presence of the girl, who also falls in love, is one of the chief characteristics of the erotic tale.

For the whole of Byzantine literature this kind of critical statement pertaining to generic categorization is extremely rare. I will briefly touch on the case of hagiography, and point to generic differentiation among several types of a saint's Life, especially between *bios* and *enkomion*. Byzantine literary criticism concerning hagiographical texts generally used criteria that traditionally were applied to rhetorical texts and by which primarily the art of composition was evaluated, thus treating hagiographical texts as a special

[80] The postposition of δίχως is not attested in Kriaras' dictionary of the vernacular texts, but it is the normal syntactical position of δίχως / δίχα according to LSJ. φουδούλαν of course is an accusative, but the -ν at the end of a word is a rather instable element in the vernacular and could easily be ignored.

case of rhetorics.[81] In this context, apparently, the question to which genre a certain text belongs was of no interest to the few "critics" we know.[82] Some Byzantines, however, mused on the generic identity of certain hagiographical texts they encountered. Occasionally, their uncertainties or doubts are reflected in a title or in a comment concerning the title. What, according to modern studies, is called the old Life of Patriarch Antony Cauleas (BHG 139) in the manuscript has the title "Funeral oration, that means a vita intertwined with an enkomion" (ἐπιτάφιος, ἤτοι βίος ἐγκωμίῳ συμπεπλεγμένος, Papadopulos-Kerameus 1899, 1). Here, the scribe obviously was puzzled by the generic versatility of the text—which was written in order to praise the recently deceased patriarch and presents his biography in an intensely rhetorical way—and was unable to decide which title to give, but it is also obvious that he clearly distinguished *bios* and *enkomion* as two different textual categories. The anonymous reader of one of the later versions of the Life of Mary the Egyptian (BHG 1044e) comments on the literary genre to which the text, in his opinion, belongs, against the title *bios* he found in the manuscript: "(This is) not a *bios*, but an *enkomion* (οὐχὶ βίος, ἀλλ' ἐγκώμιον)."[83] On which grounds did the Byzantines ascribe the quality of *enkomion* or *bios* to a certain text?[84] I do not think that it was a mere matter of high style versus middle and low style. There probably are more fundamental differences concerning the way a biographical text was presented. Whereas the *bios* is a narrative genre, the *enkomion* is not. Can we say, that the more rhetorically elaborated a biography was the less narrative it became?[85] This already thorny issue becomes even more complex if we take into consideration that criteria of generic categorization diachronically changed so that in the course of time a rhetorical speech could also be labelled *bios*. Taking a closer look at the manuscript tradition of Gregory of Nyssa's speech

[81] On Photios as a critic of hagiography see Hägg 1999, on Psellos' evaluation of Symeon Metaphrastes, cf. Høgel 2002, esp. 141–143 and 155, on some aspects of literary criticism concerning Nicephoros Gregoras' works, see Hinterberger 2004.

[82] The same goes for modern scholars of hagiography. It is astonishing that among the studies on literary aspects of hagiography discussed by Høgel 1997, there is actually none concerning genre (if we except those on the origins of the "hagiographical genre").

[83] According to Halkin 1981, 19, the unknown scribal hand is rather old (but after 1302/1303, the date of the manuscript). Halkin 1981, 17, adopts the commentator's opinion that the text should be qualified as *enkomion*.

[84] We know even less about the *hypomnema* as a special kind of saint's biography, cf. Schiffer 2004.

[85] Cf. e.g. the opposition between ἐγκωμιαστικῶς and διηγηματικῶς established by Theodoret of Kyrrhos, ed. Canivet and Leroy-Molinghen 1977–1979, II 122 (XXI 35, 1).

on Gregory the Wondermaker, we can observe how different titles reflect different stages of the text's generic perception: (sc. λόγος) εἰς τὸν βίον καὶ τὰ θαύματα τοῦ Γρηγορίου τοῦ θαυματουργοῦ has to be regarded as the original title. But we also find βίος τοῦ ἁγίου Γρηγορίου …, or ἐγκώμιον … and finally βίος καὶ πολιτεία καὶ θαύματα τοῦ Γρηγορίου (Heil, Cavarnos and Lendle 1990, 3). These different titles show that it obviously depended on a changing point of view whether it was the text's rhetorical form or its biographical content that was regarded to be its outstanding feature. In this context, it was H.-G. Beck who underlined the close relation between *bios* (as a variation on the Athanasian model-text) and the *enkomion* from which emanates the specific character of Byzantine hagiography.[86] I think that concerning the development and the characteristics of the hagiographical genre(s), the importance of the *enkomion* has so far been underestimated. More critical statements like the two mentioned above remain to be found, and further studies on generic characteristics and signals are needed before a critical survey of the subject can be undertaken in a similar way as A. did for the erotic tale.

University of Cyprus
Department of Byzantine and Modern Greeek Studies

ELIZABETH JEFFREYS

This paper is a very useful contribution to our understanding of literary developments in late Byzantium: it pulls together several strands of thought that Agapitos has been developing over the last few years, and should push study of this area of Byzantine literature into interesting directions. Some parts of the arguments, however, I find more convincing than others.

While it has been accepted for some time that the Palaiologan romances, and in particular *L&R*, were written in close dialogue with the Komnenian novels, it is helpful to have an indication of how these mechanisms came into being. It is useful to have pointed out the inclusion of the Komnenian novels, along with novels of late antiquity, in the compendious manuscripts of twelfth-century court rhetoric made for the Nicaean *literati* (though it does also emphasise that these texts were regarded, on one level at least, as examples of advanced rhetorical composition).

Agapitos is concerned to demonstrate that the terminology used by the

[86] Beck 1959, 269: "Je stärker im Laufe der Zeit sich diese Art von Bios mit dem Gesetz des rhetorischen Enkomions koppelt, desto 'byzantinischer' wird die gesamte Hagiographie." I would not restrict the importance only to theoretical rules of rhetorics, but also extend it to model-*enkomia* as, for example, the texts on saints composed by Gregory of Nyssa.

authors of his selected group of texts, as well as the 'peritext' of their rubrics, shows that they were aware of the genre in which they were writing. The evidence is not quite as neat as one would like, and Agapitos wriggles round some inconvenient areas (e.g. the status of the texts contained in Par.Gr. 2909), but the examples are suggestive. The thought that Palaiologan writers distinguised between an *erotike diegesis* and an *arche* should certainly be tested further.

Agapitos makes *L&R* the key text in the transition between what he terms the 'erotic drama' of the twelfth-century and the 'erotic tale' (the *erotike diegesis* and the *arche*) of post-1204 writing, and places its composition under the Laskarids in Nicaea. *L&R* is indeed the most sophisticated of the romances and was influential (isolated passages circulated independently, references are made to it by later writers in Crete and the Peloponnese). But I remain to be convinced about this relatively early date and pivotal position, for several reasons. One is that the next phase of romance writing would thus come after a considerable lapse of time (fifty to a hundred years—there is no space to argue this out here). Another, and more important, is that Agapitos has explicitly left out of consideration the *War of Troy*, on the grounds that it does not deal with love. On the contrary, it does. The *Roman de Troie*, the twelfth-century text on which *WoT* is closely based, represents one of the first attempts to explore the psychology of erotic love in narrative form in medieval literatures. The passages which deal with this (Troilos/Briseida/Diomedes, Achilles/Polyxene) have been taken over into the Greek translation (e.g. *WoT* 5670 ff., 6443 ff., 7704 ff., 9321 ff.). Furthermore, Agapitos stresses the role played by works of art and the terminology of craftsmanship in *L&R* and other romances: *WoT* has again taken over from its (rather old-fashioned) French original several highly wrought *ekphrases* (the Chamber of Beauty: *WoT* 6288 ff., Hektor's tomb: *WoT* 7313 ff., Achilles' tomb: *WoT* 10182 ff.). Some rare vocabulary from these descriptions coincides with that found in *L&R*: e.g. *erotidopoulon* (*WoT* 6300), *xenocharagos* (*WoT* 6323); note, too, that a word characterised by Agapitos as a 'new concept … the heroine of an erotic narrative' also occurs in the *WoT* (*phedoula* WoT 12415, 12479, 12396). The quick answer to this is, of course, that the author of the *WoT* knew *L&R*, but as the *WoT* author has been demonstrated to have created phrases in response to the French text before him, I am wary of the quick answer. Some years ago I produced a 'stemma' (reproduced by Beaton in his *Medieval Greek Romance*) indicating an apparent pattern of relationships between the Palaiologan romances: *WoT* was up there at the top, looming like a distant planet, its effect apparent but unquantified. The situation has not changed (*mea culpa*). One reason, of course, for this looming presence is the issue of the repeated phrases and mixed language

found in so many of the Palaiologan romances. But this is an old debate, not yet resolved, and shirked by Agapitos here—not unreasonably since he has other agendas. But the language of the romances is an issue that will have to be addressed properly in any full discussion of their nature: it is not enough to talk of cutting and pasting.

So there are some highly suggestive ideas put forward here, but the selection of material on which the argument is based—wide though it is and drawing, in the case of *A&S*, on texts not hitherto considered in this context—has left some potentially extremely important evidence out of consideration. *WoT* may not fit neatly into the packages of genre and structure that Agapitos has discerned, but it is surely part of the thought world that produced these packages. No account of the Palaiologan vernacular romance of love can ignore it.

Oxford University
Sub-Faculty of Byzantine and Modern Greek

MARC LAUXTERMANN

As there is hardly anything I disagree with, this could well turn out to be the shortest comment on the excellent paper presented by our symposiarch, Panagiotis Agapitos, who—let it be known—is himself the author of a thoroughly Byzantine romance disguised as a detective story, Τὸ ἐβένινο λαούτο ("The Ebony Lute"), which was published in the summer of 2003.[87] Its main character, Leo, an ambassador to the Abbasids who has to solve a murder mystery in Caesarea, exploits unusual methods in order to unravel the threads of a highly intricate plot set against the poetic landscape of the Byzantine romance—for just as the scribe of the *Consolatory Tale* was surprised to find out that this allegoric poem was not about love, so, too, the modern reader discovers to his own surprise that the main theme of Τὸ ἐβένινο λαούτο is actually not murder, but love. As the story unfolds, Leo has to face, time and again, the ghosts of the past. What he discovers is that all stories, not only those that start *medias in res* (as, for example, Heliodorus' novel of which Leo is an avid reader), stretch back in time. After all, a story is a history, or to be more precise, it is part of a history that transcends the boundaries of narrative discourse: where the story begins, history has already begun, and where the story ends, history will mercilessly proceed. History is the *hors-texte* of which Derrida disapproved because it threatened, in his opinion, the freedom of multiple interpretations by denying that it, too, was a mere textual construct. Be that as it may, I still think it is worthwhile to look

[87] See the publisher's website at www.agra.gr.

beyond the text at its contexts and to see the Palaiologan romance as the product of various earlier attempts to tell a good story. In his paper, Agapitos sketches the prehistory of the Palaiologan romance, which, through the intermediary stage of *Livistros and Rodamni*, ultimately goes back to the Komnenian novel. I could not agree more. In what follows, however, I would like to point out that both the discourse of love and narrative techniques, much like the ones employed in the romances, are features we encounter in other twelfth-century genres as well. In fact, I strongly believe that the four extant novels (Prodromos, Eugenianos, Manasses, Makrembolites) merely form the tip of the iceberg—that is, of the fiery and flaming iceberg of Eros. Erotic discourse has its antecedents. Like the hero of Agapitos' novel, who comes to understand that past and present are intertwined, we must search for the story behind the story.

And this is where the story begins: the Komnenian age. Most Byzantinists nowadays agree that Komnenian literature is characterized by the following three features: the highly rhetorical voice, the use of various stylistic registers (including vernacular), and the exploitation of the self as a literary device. The twelfth-century erotic novels fit perfectly into these general trends. This is something I will not elaborate upon because it has been demonstrated by the "erotic" specialists far better than I could ever hope to achieve. But I have the impression that the discussion, until recently, has been too self-centred, with much time and effort devoted to the diachronic study of the novel from Hellenistic times to the end of Byzantium and to the synchronic study of erotic motifs (Basilakes, Manganeios Prodromos). In order to understand the sudden emergence of the erotic novel in the twelfth century, we need to look in all directions: other narrative texts, such as the "Lucianic" satires (*Timarion*), the oriental tales (*Stephanites and Ichnelates*), hagiography (*Life of Cyril Phileotes* by Nicholas Kataskepenos); narration embedded in other genres (letters, orations, poems); and narrative techniques in contemporary art (for example, the deathbed scene of the Koimesis). We also need to search for novelistic themes in the rest of twelfth-century literature: ethical admonitions (think of *Syntipas*, the *Dioptra* by Philip Monotropos, the *Muses* attributed to Alexios Komnenos), the rhetorical self (think of the resignation poems by Nicholas of Corfu and Mouzalon, most of Prodromos' poems, the brilliant *Hodoiporikon* by Manasses), the theatrical setting (think of Haplucheir, Prodromos' vernacular satires and, once again, the *Hodoiporikon*), the lamentations (think of Theophylaktos of Ohrid's monody, Kallikles' epitaphs, Constantine Stilbes' description of a devastating fire), etc. Furthermore, we need to know more about the modes of literary communication in twelfth-century Constantinople (the so-called *theatra*, the intricate problem of listening versus reading, manuscript production,

paratexts, literary networks, and so on). In short, what I would like to stress is that the "erotic" specialists should broaden their horizons and venture beyond the limits of the literary genre they study because that is the only way to understand it properly. It is a conundrum, for instance, why Manasses' beautiful *Hodoiporikon* has been foolishly disregarded and neglected by all experts in the field of the Komnenian novel. Instead of studying the insipid fragments of *Aristandros and Kallithea*, why not look at this poem that displays all the rhetorical techniques of the erotic novel although it does not belong to this genre?

In fact, erotic discourse can be found in all kinds of literature, not only in the novel. Let me give an example. During the years of his episcopate (1182–1204) Michael Choniates commissioned a picture of the city of Athens, which was most probably placed in a church that he had redecorated (in Byzantine art it is common to picture the benefactor with a model of the city in his hands). His *Lament on the City of Athens* is the literary counterpart to this image (Lampros 1880b, 397–398). In the poem, Choniates combines rhetorical ekphrasis with two other genres: monody and erotic discourse. Typical of monody are the elegiac colouring, the sorrow, the histrionic lamentation (often with obvious references to the mourning rituals), the rapid concatenation of short phrases, the exclamations, the shrieks of pain. All this can be found in the verses that lament the decay of Athens' ancient glory and its present misery. In the following passage, however, Michael Choniates exploits the imagery of erotic discourse in order to explain that the picture of the citymap he had made cannot satisfy his desire to see the real Athens as it once used to be:

> As it is impossible (oh poor me!) to see that celebrated city anywhere […], I fully suffer the pain of the love-smitten, who, unable to view the faces of their loved ones as they really are when they are present, look at their pictures in a mental sort of way and thus soothe their burning love. Like another unhappy Ixion, I yearn for Athens as he did for Hera – like him, I stealthily cling to a ghostly appearance. I suffer, I speak, I paint – oh poor me! Living in Athens I nowhere see Athens, but only the dust of glory, miserable and unreal.

In order to express his yearning for the unattainable, that is: the glory of ancient Athens, Michael Choniates compares himself to one of those lovesick characters that inhabit the fictional world of the Byzantine romance, who if they cannot see their loved one, gaze lovingly at his/her picture—*faute de mieux*. Just as lovers soothe their love's anguish by looking at a picture, so does Michael Choniates comfort himself by looking at the idealized image of the city of Athens, not only as it was depicted in the painting made on his behalf, but also as it presented itself to his mind's eye. But what did he

actually see? In the verses that follow, he describes the former glory of Athens—the Athens of the ancient orators, philosophers and tragedians. What he longs for is a purely literary Athens—a fictional city. In the time of Michael Choniates, the Parthenon had not yet been destroyed and most landmarks were still intact. The ancient city was right before his eyes; he could easily have traced the footsteps of Plato, Sophocles and Thucydides, if that was what he wanted. But Michael Choniates was not interested in the archaeological remains of Athens' past (the monumentalization of the past is in fact a modern pastime). Like all Byzantines, he was interested in the literary past, which is something quite different. The picture of Athens he visualizes on a purely literary level is really like the mental image the lover has of his love: she may be ugly to the ordinary beholder, but she becomes beautiful because he sees her as he wants her to be. It is a question of visual imagination. By translating the traditional ekphrasis into terms that properly apply to the discourse of love, Michael Choniates makes it clear that the Athens he envisages is a rhetorical Athens. It is a literary artefact. It is as fictional as the poem itself. However, by creating a discourse of longing for the non-existent, he turns it into reality through the power of words. Athens comes to life because its existence is denied, Athens becomes real because it is fictional. There is a parallel here to the so-called negative theology, according to which true knowledge of the divine essence is only possible by negating all possible attributes. Likewise, Athens is not what it is, or appears to be. It is an imaginary city that exists only in an erotic discourse of longing. It is present in its absence because the lover, unable to see it with his own eyes, transforms it into a reality of the mind. And mental images are more real than reality can ever be in Byzantium.

Let me end with a footnote concerning the reception of the Komnenian novel in later times: John Grassos, one of Otranto's poets in the first half of the thirteenth century, obviously imitates the beginning of book VII of Eugenianos' novel in poem no. X, vv. 1–6. This was already pointed out by Marcello Gigante in his *Poeti bizantini di terra d'Otranto* (Gigante 1985, 136–137), but it has curiously been overlooked by modern scholars.

Universiteit van Amsterdam
Faculty of Humanities

ULRICH MOENNIG

Die als Volksliteratur bezeichneten byzantinischen Texte des 12. bis 15. Jh.s sind das Produkt eines Versuches, neue literarische Ausdrucksformen außerhalb der traditionellen Gattungen zu etablieren. Häufig tragen Werke

aus diesem Segment der byzantinischen Literatur zwar einzelne Merkmale herkömmlicher Genera, lassen sich diesen aber nicht eindeutig zuordnen. Auch lassen sich kaum größere Untermengen erkennen, die sich in thematischer, technischer oder formaler Hinsicht als Gattungen mit festen Merkmalen beschreiben ließen. Eine Ausnahme stellt die Gruppe der Liebesromane dar, insofern als sie besonders eng an ein traditionelles literarisches Genus angebunden ist, ihr ausreichend viele Texte angehören, um eine Analyse ihrer Regeln oder vielmehr Konventionen möglich und sinnvoll erscheinen zu lassen, und von ihr Impulse für das ganze Segment ausgingen, weil sich nämlich einzelne ihrer literarischen Techniken (z.B. formelhafter Stil, Insinuierung einer mündlichen Performanz) auch in Texten ausmachen lassen, die anderen generischen Kategorien angehören. Dem spätbyzantinischen Liebesroman kam bei der Entstehung neuer Gattungen eine Schlüsselrolle zu.

Diese Ausgangslage rechtfertigt das Interesse, das dem spätbyzantinischen Liebesroman entgegengebracht wird und welches auch in der aktuellen *SO Debate* seinen Ausdruck findet. Überzeugend finde ich die Darstellung von Panagiotis Agapitos, daß *L&R* den ersten Text dieser Gruppe darstellt und daß dieser im 13. Jh. als Versuch entstanden ist, die im 12. Jh. entstandene Reihe von Romanen durch Mischung von Merkmalen verschiedener Gattungen fortzuführen. Dieser Versuch sollte den Impuls geben für eine neue Produktionsreihe, innerhalb welcher sich im Laufe der Zeit eine Anzahl von Konventionen ausbildete. Diese Konventionen ließen die Texte zunehmend stereotype Merkmale annehmen, erlaubten eine Produktion auch außerhalb des literarischen Zentrums Konstantinopel und ermöglichten zudem die Adaptation vorgegebener Erzählstoffe sowohl aus der griechischen als auch aus den westeuropäischen und den orientalischen literarischen Traditionen.[88]

Agapitos' Versuch einer konzisen Standortbestimmung stellt auch deshalb einen Meilenstein dar, weil ältere Versuche der umfassenden Betrachtung der spätbyzantinischen Produktionsreihe des Liebesromans ihrem Anspruch nicht gerecht werden. Hier möchte ich darlegen, daß die generische Kategorie «spätbyzantinischer Liebesroman» nicht trennscharf von anderen Kategorien abgrenzbar ist, daß sie keine festen Regeln und keinen Kanon ausgebildet hat und sich *exakte*, durch Abweichung von einem Kanon entstandene Unterkategorien nicht bestimmen lassen.[89]

[88] Die Veröffentlichung einer deutschen Übersetzung der Vorlage von *A&S* ist geplant in: Anetshofer 2004.

[89] Mein Modell basiert maßgeblich auf Jauß 1977.

Die genaue Anzahl der Texte ist nicht benennbar. Eine *notwendige* Voraussetzung für die Zugehörigkeit zur Reihe ist, daß ein Text von einem Leser der älteren Texte und nach deren Modell geschrieben wurde. Dies ist erkennbar, weil einige Merkmale der älteren Texte in den jüngeren aufgegriffen werden. Häufig ging dies mit der Einführung neuer Merkmale einher. So entstanden Konventionen einer Gattung, die Veränderungen unterlagen. Im Laufe der Zeit entstanden auch jüngere Bearbeitungen älterer Texte, in die inzwischen eingeführte Merkmale nachgetragen wurden. So wird in der *Ach* **N** der Protagonist mit dem Helden vor Troja identifiziert, die Handlung somit mit einem aus der historischen Literatur bekannten Ereignis verwoben.[90] Modell für die Verquickung von historischer und Liebesthematik war die *Byzantinische Ilias*. Interessant sind auch die Unterschiede zwischen *F&P* **L** und *F&P* **V**, deren eine ein Happy End bietet (Standard in den früheren Texten), während die andere mit dem Tod des männlichen Protagonisten endet (eine Option seit der *Ach*) (Cupane 1995c, 463; Smith 1999, 147). Die Frage, ob einzelne Redaktionen als eigenständige Texte gewertet werden sollten, ist nicht unwichtig für das Verständnis der Texte selbst, aber auch für die Frage, bis wann die mit *L&R* und *V&C* ins Leben gerufene Reihe produktiv war. (War sie über 1453 hinaus produktiv? War sie noch produktiv, als Vitsentzos Kornaros den *Erotokritos* schrieb?) Man kann sich auch fragen, ob einzelne Bearbeitungen einer anderen Produktionsreihe angehören. (Ist der gereimte *I&M* ein spätbyzantinischer Liebesroman? Ist der spätbyzantinische Liebesroman überhaupt in Venezianer Drucken vertreten?)

Die Schwierigkeiten der Abgrenzung und der damit einhergehenden Ausgrenzung einzelner Texte mögen aus folgenden Überlegungen deutlich werden: Wenn wir eine auf ein zentrales Protagonistenpaar ausgerichtete Standardgeschichte, deren Gegenstand die Prüfungen der beiden bis zur endgültigen Vereinigung ist, als Charakteristikum des Liebesromans akzeptieren, dann müßte zumindest diskutiert werden, warum der *Apolloniosroman* (Text bei Cupane 1995c) nicht in die Betrachtung mit einbezogen wird. Problematischer ist die Ausgrenzung von Texten, in denen die Liebesthematik in eine übergeordnete, etwa in eine historische Handlung eingeordnet ist und von Seiten des Autors gemäß den Konventionen des spätbyzantinischen Liebesromans behandelt wird. Ein Beispiel ist die Liebesgeschichte zwischen Alexander und Roxane in der Rezension *ζ des Alexanderromans (eigentlich ein historischer Bios),[91] ein anderes die Geschichte der Liebe des Achilles zu

[90] Zum Thema der *Ach*, dem «herkunftsbedingten Liebeskonflikt» s. Frenzel 1992, 465–483.

[91] Text der griechischen Rückübersetzung (ζ′): Lolos 1983, Konstantinopoulos 1983; Studie: Moennig 1992.

Polyxene im Πόλεμος τῆς Τρωάδος. Zudem liegt mit der *ByzIl* ein nach den Konventionen des Liebesromans verfaßter, mit diesen sogar spielender Text vor, in dem historische und Liebesthematik untrennbar miteinander verwoben sind. Der Übergang von «noch Liebesroman» zu «nicht mehr Liebesroman» erscheint so als graduell, keinesfalls aber als deutliche Grenze. In der *ByzIl* ist von der Protagonistin, Helena, schlicht nicht mehr die Rede, sobald das Schicksal der Stadt Troja besiegelt ist. Noch diffiziler ist das Beispiel des *Digenes Akrites*, ein Text mit einer auf einzelne Teile beschränkten Liebesthematik aus dem 12. Jh., welcher in jüngeren Bearbeitungen bis ins 18. Jh. rezipiert wurde. Wie mag ein Leser des 15. Jh.s, dem auch die jüngeren, biographisch aufgebauten und mit historischer Thematik durchwobenen Romane vertraut waren, den *Digenes Akrites* gelesen haben? Hat er eher Unterschiede gesehen oder eher Gemeinsamkeiten? (Kann ein Werk, das ursprünglich nicht als Liebesroman geschrieben wurde, in einer jüngeren Bearbeitung in die Reihe aufgenommen werden?) Intertextuelle Bezüge zwischen der *Ach* und dem *Digenes Akrites*, der *ByzIl* und dem *Apolloniosroman, A&S* und dem Πόλεμος τῆς Τρωάδος stellen ein Indiz dafür dar, daß zwischen Texten mit primärer und Texten mit sekundärer Liebesthematik mit abnehmender Schärfe getrennt wurde. Und um bei der Thematik zu bleiben: Mit den *Katalogia* (Ἐρωτοπαίγνια) im Londinensis Add. 8241 liegt (in einem Kodex mit der *Ach* **L** und *F&P* **L**) ein Text vor, der Merkmale des Liebesromans aufweist, aber keine entsprechende Handlung bietet (Text: Zoras 1956).

Ähnliche Schwierigkeiten sehe ich bei der Einteilung in Untergruppen: Agapitos' Vorschlag (zwei Untergruppen: ἐρωτικὴ διήγησις und ἀρχή) bezieht meine eigene Beobachtung, daß einige jüngere Romane als Biographie ihrer Helden aufgebaut sind, mit ein (Moennig 1999, vgl. Bachtin 1989 [Bakhtin 1981] zu den Begriffen «Chronotopos», «Abenteuerzeit» und «biographische Zeit»).[92] Ich sehe natürlich die *Möglichkeit* dieser Unterteilung, nicht aber die *Striktheit*, zumal es Zwischenformen gibt: *F&P* **L** und *I&M* sind biographisch aufgebaut, enden aber mit der glücklichen Vereinigung des Paares; *A&S* endet mit dem Tod des Paares, zu Beginn des Romans sind die beiden Protagonisten aber bereits im Erwachsenenalter.

Agapitos knüpft seine Einteilung an die Beobachtung, daß die biographisch aufgebauten Texte, die zudem primär auf den männlichen Protagonisten fokussiert sind, das Substantiv ἀρχή im Titel tragen. Den von Agapitos genannten Beispielen kann noch eines hinzugefügt werden:

[92] Zur Darstellung von Kindheit in diesen Texten s. Jouanno 1996.

I&M **V** ist mit zwei Titeln überschrieben, deren ersten Kriaras (1955) nicht wiedergibt: Ἀρχή τοῦ Ἡμπερίου.[93]

ἀρχή bezieht sich in einigen Liebesromanen auf den Beginn der Erzählung (manchmal in Abgrenzung zum Proöm) in der zeitlichen Folge der Ereignisse (siehe *K&C* 24 [Ἀρχὴ τοῦ ὑποθέσεως…, Innentitel], *K&C* 645–646 [ἤρξατο λέγειν τὴν ἀρχὴν καὶ κατὰ μέρος πάντα, τὸ γένος, τὴν ἀνατροφὴν καὶ χώραν καὶ πατρίδα vgl. *I&M* (ed. Kriaras) 3, 8]), so daß es nahe liegt zu vermuten, daß er im Laufe der Zeit zu einem *Terminus technicus* wurde, der eine Unterkategorie mit einem spezifischen Anfang der Geschichte (…τὸ γένος, τὴν ἀνατροφὴν …) bezeichnete. ἀρχή kann aber auch den Beginn eines Textes in der Handschrift bedeuten, sich also auf das Medium beziehen, und korrespondiert mit dem τέλος an deren Ende. Im Fall der *ByzIl* ist es schon optisch sehr deutlich, daß Ἀρχὴ τῆς Τρωάδος nicht der erste von zwei Titeln im *Codex unicus* Parisinus Suppl. Gr. 926 ist.[94] Es handelt sich um einen Schmutztitel auf einem separaten Blatt, auf dem sich Federproben (Zierleiste, δοκιμαζ, ο χc) und oben rechts ein α′ finden, das sonst aber unbeschrieben ist. Der Schmutztitel korrespondiert mit einem Τέλος τῆς Τρωάδος. Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν ἀμήν auf fol. 33r. Der selbe Schreiber, Michael Kyriakopulos, hat im Dezember 1521 den Laurentianus Ashburnham 1444 angefertigt, wo wiederum im Schmutztitel und zwischen Federproben ἀρχὴ τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου steht, während der eigentliche Text auf dem folgenden Blatt mit zwei Titeln überschrieben ist: Διήγησις πανεξαίρετος (!) περὶ τοῦ θαυμαστοῦ βασιλέως Ἀλεξάνδρου. Ἡ γέννησις καὶ ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου Μακεδονίας, τὸ πῶς ἐγεννήθην καὶ ἀνεθράφην καὶ τὸ πῶς εἶχεν τὴν ἀνδρείαν καὶ τὴν μάθησιν καὶ τὴν χαράν του ἀπὸ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἕως τὸ τέλος (Subskription auf fol. 190: Ἐτελειώθη ἡ παρούσα ἱστορία τοῦ Ἀλεξάνδρου διαχειρὸς ἐμοῦ Μιχαὴλ Κυριακοπούλου). Unter dem Titel Ἀρχὴ τῆς Τρωάδος findet sich auch der Πόλεμος τῆς Τροάδος im *Codex graecus* 3576 der Universitätsbibliothek Bologna. Auch andere Texte, die mit dem Liebesroman, mit anderen Kategorien des Romans und überhaupt mit einer Erzählung «von Anfang an» nichts zu tun haben, finden sich in spät- und postbyzantinischen Handschriften mit Überschriften Ἀρχὴ τοῦ…, so z.B. der *Physiologos*.

Die Beobachtung, daß ἀρχή möglicherweise eine Unterkategorie bezeichnet, ist wichtig, doch halte ich die Beleglage für zu dünn, um eine so spezifische Verwendung für einen so vieldeutigen Begriff anzunehmen. Die

[93] Das Wissen verdanke ich M. Lassithiotakis. Zu den beiden Titeln in **V** s. Lassithiotakis 2004.

[94] Der kritische Apparat bei Nørgaard and Smith 1975 ist irreführend.

beiden Belege aus dem Neapolitanus III.B.27 (*Ach* **N**, *I&M* **N**) finden sich im selben Kodex aus gleicher Hand. Das Beispiel von *I&M* **V** zeigt, daß Ἀρχὴ τοῦ… eine elliptische Ausdrucksweise ist, die in τέλος τοῦ… (siehe Ausgabe Kriaras, app. crit. zu post 893) ihr Gegenstück findet. Den Titel von *I&M* **N** könnte man also zweiteilig auffassen: 1. «Wie alles im katholischen Land Provence seinen Anfang nahm»,[95] 2. <Erzählung> (Ellipse) vom Sohn des Königs Imberios und Margarona.

Notwendige Voraussetzungen für die Zugehörigkeit eines spätbyzantinischen Textes in die Reihe der Liebesromane sind nach meinem Modell das Vorhandensein einer bestimmten Erzähltechnik und einer spezifischen Liebessprache, welche ihrerseits komplexe Merkmale sind,[96] deren einzelne Bestandteile Veränderungen unterliegen und sich zudem in Texten nachweisen lassen, die nicht die Geschichte zweier Liebenden zum Thema haben. Genau dies führt zu Schwierigkeiten der Abgrenzung des Liebesromans und zur Bestimmung von Unterkategorien. Das Phänomen, daß historische Fiktion und Liebesroman sich in der späten byzantinischen Literatur gegenseitig in ihren literarischen Mitteln beeinflussen, weist verblüffende Parallelen auf zur spätantiken Entwicklungsstufe des Romans (vgl. Holzberg 1995/2001).

Universität Hamburg
Institut für Griechische und Lateinische Philologie

INGELA NILSSON

Panagiotis Agapitos' contributions to the study of Byzantine literature in general and the Palaiologan romance in particular are numerous and clearly show the usefulness of literary approaches and "interpretation from within". In addition to the thorough analysis of the present report, let me enlarge the scope of inquiry by posing some questions related to genre. A crucial problem is that the very concept of genre incorporates two paradoxes. Firstly, even though we know that traditional taxonomy is debatable and misleading, it still seems indispensable in critical practice. Secondly, there is a constant risk of circular reasoning, which in the case of the Palaiologan romances was pointed out by Ulrich Moennig: "what we consider to be the standard of the romances as a genre depends on our selection of texts, and our selection of texts depends on what we consider to be the standard of the genre" (Moennig 1998, 2). Agapitos' selection is not the least arbitrary: he bases his corpus of

[95] Bemerkenswert ist in diesem Titel das Partizip γενομ̄νη, das sich auch im Titel der *ByzIl* und in *Ach* **N** 1860 findet.

[96] Vgl. die Einleitung zu Moennig 2004.

romances on manuscript evidence, thematic structures, and, above all, a close knowledge of the texts in question. The system for which he argues is both convincing and attractive; the question is simply: Can one draw such a neatly coherent picture?

The corpus defined by Agapitos is divided into two subgenres and, based on manuscript evidence, termed *diegesis* and *arche*. To begin with, I do not understand the use of the term *arche*: how does the word *arche* come to function as a generic term, and, if so, what does it really mean, more than "beginning" (of a tale, a poem, a war)? In *Ach* **N**, it seems possible to interpret the "title" *arche* as a first rubric referring to the prologue 1–20 (cf. the following two rubrics, v. 21 ἀρχὴ καὶ πρώτη διδαχή and v. 42 διήγησις πάνυ ὡραιοτάτη), which would explain why *Ach* **O**, missing in the prologue, has the title *diegesis*.[97] In *ByzIl*, the same interpretation seems possible: the title given in the *codex unicus* consists, as I understand it, of two parts: διήγησις κτλ and ἀρχὴ τῆς Τρωάδος, which could be read as title followed by first rubric (cf. Nørgaard & Smith 1977, 23). It is clear that the two subgenres are different, but I am still not convinced that the titles given in the MSS, *arche* as well as *diegesis*, carry such a strong generic significance.[98] As for the *diegesis*, it seems to me that the role of the Komnenian and, consequently, ancient novel tradition may be underrated in the analysis of poetological principles. Considering the level of textual connections between *L&R* and *H&H*, and the appearance of the devices art, amazement, and instruction in *H&H* (and, previously, in *Daphnis & Chloe*), I have difficulties grasping the high level of innovation displayed by those elements in *L&R*. As far as I understand, the devices have been developed by the author and function in partly different ways, gradually turning into clichés which are then used in new creative ways. A consideration of this very tension between tradition and innovation, creativeness and clichés would have been helpful, rather than focusing only on the innovative character of *L&R*.

A more general question, which is often disregarded in discussions of genre, is that of the status and position of translations and adaptations in a literary tradition. Translations have in general been held in lower esteem than adaptations (which is related to issues of creativeness and imitativeness—a recurrent theme in discussions of Byzantine literature), but a question rarely posed is that of the difference between the two: how does an adaptation differ from a translation; where are we to draw the line between the two? Vague

[97] This interpretation seems to be implied also in Smith's edition of *Ach* **N**; see Smith 1999, 15.

[98] Cf. Agapitos & Smith 1992, 50–51, where it is argued that the titles do not imply generic cohesion, and Moennig 1998, 1–2.

expressions such as "free translation" or "loose adaptation" do not make it any easier, nor do scholarly quibbles about which one a certain text actually *is* solve anything (see, e.g., Agapitos & Smith 1992, 51, n. 114). Both terms are in fact vague *per se*, since any literary text may be seen as a translation of previous ideas and forms, whereas, at the same time, any translation is an adaptation, an act of transforming a text into something new. This perspective seems particularly relevant to the Byzantine tradition, where literature is based on concepts of *mimesis* and where many works to varying degrees *are* adaptations, not only of foreign, but, above all, of Greek material (cf. Moennig 1998, 6).

How, then, do we go about considering a genre and defining a corpus: which translations/adaptations do we include and which are to be excluded? In the case of the Byzantine romances, some consideration has certainly been taken to this group of "non-original" narratives of both Western and Oriental origin; they have rarely been completely left out, and now they have been partly included by Agapitos in his corpus. The criteria for this selection are basically two: love must play a central role in the story and the narrative should belong/be connected to the Byzantine tradition (pp. 6–7). I do not argue with this choice as such, but I do ask whether the level of modification really is the right principle to apply. It would mean that only the "Byzantinized" narratives are relevant and that a large portion of "the fringe" is completely left out.[99] It deserves to be emphasized that any translation/adaptation belongs to a literary tradition; the person who made it expected someone else to read it and thus responded to those presumed expectations, and it is therefore relevant to our understanding of a genre. And as soon as we view a literary tradition from the perspective of what is produced within it, without excluding any part of it ideologically, we inevitably come to another canonical conclusion.

It would accordingly be useful, I think, to imagine a more loosely structured genre concept—not a system, but a network, or even a process—where literature is interrelated in a less evolutionary, more multidimensional manner.[100] We should stick to the historical perspective and the search for common traits (just as Agapitos does), but seek relations and interactions

[99] The term is used in the case of the ancient novel and its related texts, see Holzberg 1996; on the fringe of the Byzantine romance, see Moennig 1998. A related issue is that of fragments and lost texts; Beaton mentions Byzantine testimonia and fragments of lost romances (Beaton 1996, 107; surprisingly not commented upon by Agapitos & Smith 1992).

[100] Basically in line with Fowler's ideas of family relations, but taking into consideration Hans Robert Jauß' concept of Medieval genres as expressed in Jauß 1982, 76–80, 94–97, 99–109, reprinted in Duff 2000, 128–147.

instead of characteristics, and the fringe would automatically be included. Texts like *Ach* and *ByzIl* with their Byzantine Troy matter could then be seen not as deviations from a canon, but as partly belonging to another tradition, related to history and chronicle (cf. Nørgaard & Smith 1977, 1–14), and characteristics which from the romantic perspective are regarded as exceptions or discrepancies could be considered from another point of view. This does not necessarily mean that we understand the novel and/or romance as a non-defined, open genre (cf. Beaton 1996, 101; Moennig 1998, 6–7), but that we once and for all renounce the concept of pure genre and acknowledge that our understanding of order does not require spotless systems.

The point of these remarks has been to exemplify the difficulties involved with defining a genre; these difficulties must, however, not paralyse us, and the paradoxes of genre must not stop us from using it in our attempts to understand literature. I assume that the present debate will show how dramatically the study of Byzantine literature has changed in the past few years, not the least thanks to Agapitos' work (cf. the *SO Debate* of 1998). Perhaps a future debate will show the same development in questions of Byzantine genre.

Freie Universität Berlin, Byzantinisch-Neugriechisches Seminar[101]
Uppsala University, Department of Linguistics and Philology

Paolo Odorico

Nous sommes les enfants de Linné, les héritiers de Descartes, et nous sommes tenus de le démontrer inlassablement. Notre métier est de diviser un problème en autant de morceaux que nous le pouvons, afin de les réunir dans des catégories semblables pour y trouver une logique de classification, et pour ce faire, nous recherchons les traces cachées d'une parenté qu'elles sont censées entretenir entre elles. Notre société, qui a perdu Dieu, le recherche dans la logique d'un monde bien ordonné, dont l'existence demeure fort douteuse. Même la littérature, qui de par sa nature devrait échapper à la rigidité des catégories, y est soumise, et cela au moins depuis Aristote. Autant s'y faire.

P. Agapitos l'a bien démontré: toute tentative de contraindre la production «romanesque» byzantine dans des cadres apparemment logiques a été bientôt contestée et ensuite abandonnée. C'est le cas de la division entre littérature

[101] This comment was written during the tenure of a research fellowship awarded by the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung; I am truly grateful for the excellent working conditions offered by the foundation and the institute.

byzantine en langue savante et littérature populaire en langue démotique (production définie parfois comme néogrecque!), mais aussi, en ce qui concerne les «romans» byzantins, entre «poésie légendaire et historique à contenu national», «poésie romanesque sur des thèmes médiévaux ou partiellement occidentaux» et «poésie romanesque sur des thèmes antiques». Il est évident que toute catégorie demande des critères de définition, et que ces critères, faute d'indications de la part des Byzantins eux-mêmes, ne peuvent être que les nôtres. Mais cela n'est-il pas tout aussi valable pour toute division fondée sur des critères de contenu, voire sur des observations effectuées sur la tradition manuscrite? Il est évident que nos constructions sont des tentatives de mettre de l'ordre après coup, et qu'elles ne correspondent pas au devenir de la production littéraire. Parmi ces constructions, à mon avis, la plus réussie est celle de H.A.Théologitis (2004) qui, étant encore sous presse, ne pouvait pas être prise en compte par Agapitos.

L'exposé d'Agapitos a le grand mérite de proposer une stratification chronologique, et l'avantage d'être extrêmement clair et bien bâti. Certaines remarques sur la tradition manuscrite, l'analyse de l'évolution de la production littéraire «romanesque», l'étendue des sujets abordés font de sa contribution un point de repère pour les recherches futures. La position de maillon entre la production de l'époque comnène et celle de l'époque paléologue assignée au roman *Livistros et Rhodamnè*, explique les processus de transformation des «romans d'antiquité» du XIIe siècle en des «romans» du XIVe. Cependant, pour ce faire, Agapitos a été obligé d'organiser le matériau selon les nécessités de son analyse: de lors, il ne s'agit pas du constat d'une évolution, mais de la recherche d'éléments dont les Byzantins n'avaient probablement pas conscience. C'est ce qui permet à l'analyse d'être stricte; mais alors, elle ne peut pas tolérer d'exception. La prise en compte des textes à analyser doit être totale et systématique, faut de quoi la taxinomie proposée, étant donnée sa subjectivité, risque d'être vouée à l'échec.

Dans son exposé, Agapitos ne prend pas en compte la totalité du matériau et, très honnêtement, il nous en averti. Parmi ces exceptions se trouve la pièce la plus énigmatique de toute la production en langue démotique: le *Digénis Akritas* (**DA**), dont selon Agapitos la recension **G** date du XIIIe siècle. En effet, **DA** est absolument singulier. Étant donné que ce poème occupe une place centrale dans toute réflexion sur la production littéraire en langue démotique, je propose de revenir sur quelques aspects relatifs à sa chronologie: nous nous passerons volontiers du débat sur la nature du texte («roman», «épopée» ou «roman épique»?), qui pourtant, et pour des raisons idéologiques, a souvent dérouté la recherche. Comme dans le cas de plusieurs pièces byzantines, **DA** présente des rédactions différentes: les six manuscrits

(tous d'époque paléologue ou post-byzantine) contenant le texte—traditionnellement indiqués par les sigles **T, A, P, O, G** et **E**—peuvent être réunis dans trois familles: **T, A, P** et **O** dérivés d'une recension **Z*** (où l'astérisque indique l'original du remanient hypothétique), **G** dérivé de **G***, et **E** de **E***. Personne ne sait à quelle période remontent **Z*,G*** et **E***, ni a quelle époque il faut dater le poème original **D*** (la *Digénide*).

Exemple privilégié pour l'étude de l'évolution d'un texte, **DA** peut nous montrer par quels biais et dans quels contextes une pièce s'adapte aux changements de goûts et aux contraintes des modes. Mais voilà que Digénis se dérobe volontiers à nos préoccupations. Dans les formes existantes, il montre bien de caractères en commun avec les catégories proposées par Agapitos: par exemple, la présence des «remarques», parfois anciennes, comme les effets de la stupeur qui saisie l'âme devant la beauté, que ce soit celle de l'être aimé ou celle du chef d'œuvre inanimé (à noter que le mot *xénocharagos* est utilisé par **E** à propos du revêtement de dalles de marbre du château construit par le héros), et parfois et à coup sûr introduites par quelqu'un qui n'est ni l'auteur de **D*** ni l'auteur du remaniement, comme dans le cas de la préface en vers iambiques présenté par **G**. Je crois que ce sont précisément ces éléments qui ont poussé Agapitos à insérer **DA** dans le cadre de la production du XIIIe siècle, réconforté par les incertitudes des «akritologues». Mais toute taxinomie doit éviter soigneusement le danger de l'auto-définition, qui de par sa nature lui est ennemie: par exemple, considérer comme élément caractéristique d'une époque la présence du mot *xénocharagos* dans un texte, et ensuite dater une œuvre sur la base de cette présence. En effet, pour être opératoire, toute taxinomie ne peut qu'être descriptive, et non normative: les systèmes élaborés par Linné dans les sciences naturelles ou par Propp dans la littérature obéissent à cette règle. S'il s'avère que **DA** est un produit plus ancien du XIIIe siècle, voilà que la taxinomie proposée rencontre des obstacles sérieux.

En réalité nous ne savons pas à quelle époque inscrire la rédaction originale du poème (**D***), ni les deux plus anciens remaniements, **G*** et **E***. Le tournant dans les études du **DA** est représenté par l'édition de la rédaction **E** par Alexiou (1985 et 1990). On a reproché au savant éditeur le fait d'avoir parfois réécrit le texte avec des interventions arbitraires. Toutefois son travail, soigné, intelligent et attentif, susceptible d'être amélioré dans des passages marginaux, nous fournit un texte exceptionnel qui remet en question tous les acquis sur le poème. Le seul reproche qu'on pourrait faire à Alexiou est de s'être arrêté au beau milieu du gué: sa reconstitution du texte nous montre clairement que le remaniement **E** est très proche de l'original **D***, la *Digénide* perdue dont tout le monde rêve depuis la découverte du poème à la fin du XIXe s. À mon sens, la plus grande proximité de **E*** à **D*** par rapport a **G*** est

assurée par une simple constatation: la réécriture d'un texte populaire dans une langue savante, ainsi que le processus opposé, sont des phénomènes bien connus à Byzance; cependant, si nous pouvons imaginer facilement que quelqu'un ait retouché un texte populaire pour le «corriger» à partir d'une langue démotique, mais cultivée (comme c'est les cas dans le remaniement **G**), dans le cas contraire il ne s'agirait pas d'un remaniement, mais d'une réécriture radicale, conduite sur un canevas savant, où tout est modifié par un recours continu à des chansons populaires, qui en auraient fourni les modes d'expressions. Or, cette réécriture, qui utilise exclusivement le registre des chants populaires, me semble nécessiter des moyens et des techniques littéraires qui ne sont pas celles des Byzantins. Sur cette base, je pense que le remaniement **E*** est très proche de **D***, même si rien ne nous empêche d'imaginer que son contenu peut avoir été partiellement modifié. À partir du constat que je viens d'exprimer et des études de Ricks (1989, 1990), nous voyons que la forme première de la *Digénide* était celle d'un recueil de chants populaires, cousus ensemble pour leur donner la forme d'une biographie.

Il est vrai que nous ne connaissons ni la date ni de **D***, ni celle de **E*** ou de **G***. Depuis longtemps, une recherche minutieuse a été entreprise pour relever le moindre détail et le mettre en relation avec des données historiques. Ce travail de fourmis avait donné quelques résultats, qui permettaient de dater **E*** du XIe–XIIe s. Le massacre de ces résultats a été opéré par Galatariotou (1993), qui a avancé à juste titre de nombreuses réserves sur ce qui semblait acquis. Mais il faut bien dire que ce massacre n'autorise pas non plus d'autres datations. Ce n'est pas ici le lieu d'entrer dans des détails. À mon sens, l'article de Magdalino (1993), fondé sur les conditions historiques et culturelles existantes entre le XIe et le XIIe s., nous permet de dater à cette époque à la fois la *Digénide* et ses deux premiers remaniements. Si cela est vrai, il faut aussi se poser la question du rôle joué par ces trois textes dans la «renaissance» soudaine des «romans» à l'époque comnène (Odorico 2003).

Venons-en aux conclusions. Tout en reconnaissant à la contribution d'Agapitos beaucoup de mérites et d'originalité, je suggère de vérifier la taxinomie proposée sur la base de la totalité des textes, et de donner davantage d'espace à **DA**, qui a toutes les chances d'être le plus ancien exemple de ce type de production que nous considérons—probablement à tort—comme une catégorie littéraire significative.

École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales
Centre d'études byzantines, néo-helléniques et sud-est européennes

EUSTRATIOS PAPAIOANNOU

Panagiotis Agapitos has offered us much to ponder with his insightful study. It is a study, as I see it, of interrelations: between our methodological presuppositions (part of what he calls *Wissenschaftsgeschichte*), literary theory *in* the texts (or, else, poetics), and texts. Successfully implementing "inner operative principles" as an alternative to modern conceptualisations of literature, Agapitos has brought us significantly closer to the understanding of vernacular Byzantine literature, a literature often (to use Agapitos' motto) *praised* (by modern ideologies) *or blamed* (by modern aesthetics), *but rarely understood*. That this is a fruitful way to approach the vernacular romances cannot but be apparent to the reader of Agapitos' lucid account.

In what follows, I bring two small contributions to the *debate*: the first is a likely continuation of the search for inner operative principles toward, this time, the direction of Byzantine concepts of fictionality; the second is a further example from Byzantine literature that supports Agapitos' discussion of canon and deviation.[102]

First, fictionality.[103] In the *Report,* one is masterfully guided through one major shift in the history of meta-fiction, *i.e.* in the history of the self-reflexivity of fictional writing. From the Komnenian to the Palaiologan times meta-fiction moves from "display" or "narrated representation" toward "narrative as action"; from (oral) *drama* it moves to (written) *diegesis,* or from performance (as one could call it) it shifts to narration. In my opinion, this shift not only permeates views regarding the *mode* (the *how*) of fiction, but also regarding *fictionality* itself (the *what* of fiction) as well as the *effect* that the encounter with fiction is to produce. Let me give an example. If one were to juxtapose the later Byzantine texts that Agapitos discusses with, for instance, Makrembolites' novel *Hysmine and Hysminias* (ed. Marcovich 2001), two different approaches would emerge:

(a) In the Palaiologan texts, as is demonstrated in the *Report*, narration is qualified with epithets that denote "strangeness" or "otherness" (e.g. *xenos, allotrios, paraxenos, exairetos, megas*, etc.); to its recipients, this "strange"

[102] These contributions are part of a major project in which I am currently engaged, namely the revision for publication of what is listed in the bibliography as Papaioannou 2000; thus, for a fuller analysis I refer the reader to this forthcoming work.

[103] Two studies may suffice here for an introduction to concepts of fictionality and their historical background: Iser 1991 and Gill and Wiseman 1993; especially, for the purposes of our discussion here, I should like to point to the article by J. R. Morgan, included in the latter study (Morgan 1993).

narration induces pleasure and, primarily, "astonishment."[104] Thus fictionality is seen as an absolute alterity that is received with an acknowledgement of this alterity, namely, with wonder, awe, and fear.

(b) In Makrembolites' novel, the world of fiction is full of objects of sight—some of them "real," such as cities, processions, dinner-feasts, others explicitly fictional or *artistic*, such as gardens, thoughts, and dreams—which are described primarily as being varied (*poikilos, pantodapos*) and which cause *pathos* to their viewer: they transform their viewer into a passive recipient.[105] If we take these various objects of sight as metaphors for the concept of fictionality that is presupposed by the novel (and there is good reason to do so, if one bears in mind that these objects of sight are often described as *plasmata,* namely fictions), then it appears that in Makrembolites fictionality is perceived as the condition of multiplicity, variation, and change, i.e. as an alterity that is itself in constant alteration, and which, furthermore, causes alteration and change to its recipients.

Before discussing the theoretical implications of these distinct views of fictionality, it is worth noting that premodern literary theory was conscious of such differing categories—even if the distinctions do not appear to be clearly in opposition to one another (as delineated above). In the *On the Sublime* (written sometime in the first centuries AD—the authorship and date of composition is part of a scholarly debate recently renewed by Heath 1999) we read of *dramatikon* and *diegematikon* modes of discourse (the former assigned to the *Iliad*, the latter to the *Odyssey*). Most importantly, we read about ideal discourse causing astonishment (*ekplexis*) by the presence of sublimity (*hypsos*) and wondrousness (*thaumasion*).[106] According to the *On the Sublime,* this wondrousness is a result of the *super-naturality* of ideal discourse—the author

[104] The vocabulary is consistent with Byzantine rhetoric; cf., e.g., Michael Psellos, *Or. min.* 37.1–6 (ed. Littlewood 1985) where a strange (*xenos*) sight causes *ekplexis*. One is also reminded of the terminology employed in order to explain marginal signs in middle Byzantine manuscripts such as those of Gregory of Nazianzus; e.g. in Vat. Pal. gr. 402 (11th century), f. 4, one reads that the sign of "note" (*semeiosai*) is placed when something *xenon* in *dogma, historia,* or *phrasis* is encountered in the text of Gregory (Tacchi-Venturi 1893, 149); see also Athen. Bibl. Nat. 2209 (a. 1018; cf. Marava-Chatzinicolaou, A. and C. Toufexi-Paschou 1997, 98–101); for further examples see Astruc 1974.

[105] Cf. *Hysmine and Hysminias* (Marcovich 2001) 1.1.1, 1.5.8, 3.3.1–2, 3.7.5–8.1, 4.21.2, 4.25.1–2, 9.3.2, 11.4.5 and *passim*; for *pathos* cf. Agapitos 1998a, Cupane 1986, Nilsson 2001; but also MacAlister 1994.

[106] *On the Sublime* 1.4, 9.13, 15.2 (ed. Russell 1964). Cf. Strabo, *Geographica* 1.2.17 (ed. Meineke) where *mythos* is said to produce pleasure (*hedone*) and astonishment (*ekplexis*).

vacillates between the use of the terms *hyper-phues* and *megalo-phues*: in the former term the supernatural is regarded as meta-physical, in the latter term the supernatural is regarded as maximally *physical* (as *nature* in its absolute magnitude). What we find in *On the Sublime* is an adumbration of two separate trends in the function of discourse (trends recently discussed by Goldhill 2002, 21f.). The one trend, represented by archaic literature such as that of Homer (Goldhill refers to Prier 1989), views discourse as the vehicle of the *meta-natural* that causes *wonder*; the other trend, cultivated by classical prose writers beginning with Herodotus and culminating with Aristotle, views discourse as the site where the *wonder* caused by *nature* is investigated, analysed, *explained.* "Longinus" (the author of *On the Sublime*), similar to his Palaiologan counterparts, seems to lean toward the former trend, valuing the meta-physical, the absolute otherness of the world (divine in "Longinus," fictional in the Palaiologan romances) of discourse which causes astonishment but is *not* followed by a desire to explain.[107]

For fictionality as variation and multiplicity, namely Makrembolites' approach to fictionality, one need not but turn to Plato's *Republic* (see, e.g., Too 1998) as well as to the theorization of that foundational text by Neoplatonist interpreters such as Proclus in the fifth century AD (cf. Lamberton 1986) with their multiple references to, and lengthy discussions of, the multiplicity (*poikilia*, etc.) of poetry/fiction. As for *pathos,* it would suffice to refer the reader to a canonical author for the Byzantines, namely Gregory of Nazianzus, and his common references to intense emotional reactions to texts.[108]

What do these distinct views of discourse and, more specifically, fictionality (in the Komnenian and Palaiologan texts) signify? I would suggest that those conceptualisations which regard literature as an *awe-inspiring mystery* (as a strange or *other* world), which causes wonder, wish to identify distinct boundaries between the real and the fictional, between reader and text, between the familiar and the foreign. By contrast, those conceptualisations that portray literature as the site of a multiple reality, which causes an experience of that same multiplicity also *within* the self of the recipient, regard fiction as *another* aspect of reality with fluid and indefinite boundaries between self and other. The latter conceptualisations regard fiction as a mask, a play, a performance, the former as a clearly separated

[107] It is perhaps not surprising that Symeon the New Theologian (eleventh century) and the vernacular romances use the same language of *awe* (cf. Agapitos in Ljubarskij 1998, 28–29); both see *awe* as being induced by *meta-physical* entities.

[108] The relevant texts and their meta-rhetorical background are discussed in Papaioannou 2005; see also fn. 1 above.

world, a world that is intriguing but also safely marked as other, foreign, *xenos*.[109]

That fictionality in the vernacular romances is portrayed as a clearly distinct *other* realm is raised as a suggestion here, yet its indubitable parallelism with several premodern theories of discourse brings me to my second point, which deals with the notion of *literary canon*. Agapitos convincingly shows how vernacular romantic literature finds its canon in *Livistros and Rhodamne*, a novel that mixes the Hellenistic/Komnenian novel with new, later Byzantine, features. A similar process of *canonization* took place in rhetorical theoretical debates in eleventh-century Constantinople (on the period, see Agapitos 1998c). I refer to the establishment of Gregory of Nazianzus as *the* model for rhetorical practice. The process had surely begun earlier but it reached its peak in the eleventh century as the texts of John Sikeliotes, John Doxapatres, and Michael Psellos suggest.[110] These authors, peaking with Psellos' absolute praise of Gregory, see the *Theologian* as a new Demosthenes, the unquestionable star of Byzantine (as opposed to Hellenic) discourse. If we are to believe John Mauropous (Psellos' teacher and friend), the primacy of Gregory was the product of heavy debate between admirers of Gregory and devotees of Basil the Great and John Chrysostom.[111]

What interests me here is that the Gregory whom the eleventh century theoreticians saw as their model was partially their own construction, a "mixture" (to use Agapitos' description of *canon*) of a theological and a rhetorical Gregory. Simply put, Gregory's texts were seen by his eleventh

[109] Is it a coincidence that Makrembolites chooses to perform his narrative in the first-person while Palaiologan narratives prefer (with the exception of the *Nicean* Livistros) the "third-person perspective"? Ancient theoreticians argue that the writers of fiction use (and must use) the third person rather than the first, so that the gap between truth and unreality is clearly marked; Theon "quoting" Aristotle (*Progymnasmata* 74.21f., ed. Spengel; discussed in Morgan 1993, 180).

[110] The texts: John Sikeliotes, *Comm. on* On the Forms (ed. Walz); John Doxapatres, *Prolegomena* (ed. Rabe); Michael Psellos, *Discourse Improvised on the Style of Theologian* (ed. Mayer 1911, 48–60 and Levy 1912, 46–63) and *Styles of the Fathers* (ed. Boissonade 1838, 124–131). To these one is perhaps to add John Geometres' *Laudation of Gregory* (ed. Tacchi-Venturi 1893), even if, at first glance, this text seems to belong to the tenth century constructions of Gregory: cf., e.g., Nicetas the Paphlagonian's *Encomium* of Gregory in Rizzo, 1976.

[111] The relevant text is titled *Discourse on the Three Holy Fathers and Teachers, Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and John Chrysostom*, ed. Bollig and de Lagarde 1882, 106–119. Mauropous' real or imagined "controversy" interestingly resembles or, perhaps, intentionally emulates the *canonization* of Demosthenes in the first century BC, when rhetoricians in Rome were arguing whether Demosthenes or other Attic rhetors, such as Lysias, were to be granted primacy (see Wisse 1995).

century followers as an ideal mixture of content and form; while Gregory himself had wished to use rhetoric in order to promote his theological message, Sikeliotes, Doxapatres, and Psellos used the unquestionable *theological* authority of Gregory in order to justify their rhetorical project. As I wish to argue, this new "Gregory" played a significant role in the flourishing of rhetoric in the aftermath of the eleventh century and part of this flourishing was the production of novelistic fictional literature in the Komnenian court. This latter type of literature was, to a certain extent, a deviation from the *canon* "Gregory"; and this because rhetoric was now not only the form but also the content of discourse. From rhetorical-cum-theological discourse, Byzantine literati had now moved to purely rhetorical *logoi.*

If this description of a significant moment in the history of Byzantine literature is correct, then it appears (to return to Agapitos' *report*) that canon is always a *deviation-in-the-making*; much like *Livistros* in the thirteenth century, the rhetorical "Gregory" of the eleventh century looks backward as well as forward: on the one hand, intellectuals like Sikeliotes and Psellos wish to return to the elevated theological discourse of the fourth-century church father, while on the other hand they want to authorize their own mastery of rhetoric. And the story is an old one. The first proclamation of canon in the history of literary theory—Aristotle's *Poetics*—was an ingenious mixture of centripetal and centrifugal forces, notoriously confusing its readers by its simultaneous premodernity and modernity. As is often argued, as soon as a thought is uttered, its opposite is born.

The Catholic University of America
Department of Greek and Latin

REPLY TO THE COMMENTS

PANAGIOTIS A. AGAPITOS

It was only after I had finished writing the report that I got hold of the recently published *Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, edited by Roberta Krueger (2000). Many of the issues touched upon and even some of the conclusions drawn in my report are similar to the ones presented by individual contributors in this fine volume. Having read through the book and then through the comments of the eight participants in the debate, I came to realize how many issues are still open for discussion, how many questions remain unanswered but also how many avenues of approach lie open before us in the study of Byzantine narratives of love. For example, those of my proposals that met with varying degrees of objection (e.g. the

selection of texts to be discussed or the concept of genre), reflect the lack of consensus in a number of crucial issues, such as terminology, taxonomy, chronology, and hermeneutic method. I perceive this as a good thing because it allows for creative contestation and intellectual progress within a relatively young field that has not as yet reached saturation on many different levels of scholarly inquiry.

However, as Krueger (2000, 8–9) hints in her introduction, the medieval Greek romances had to be sadly omitted from *Medieval Romance*, even though Byzantium did play an important role in the creation of the French *romans d'antiquité* (Jeffreys 1980), while Western narrative traditions and texts migrated to the East. In other words, Byzantine narrative literature has not as yet found a self-evident place in the discussions on medieval literature in general. Yet, I firmly believe that Byzantinists could seriously profit from and fruitfully contribute to these discussions. Thus, I have decided to structure my reply not by responding to the comments of the eight participants individually, but by arranging their objections and suggestions in a series of broader topics.

Let me start with the issue of exclusion and the notion of coherence. The definition I proposed for "romances of love" in section II of the report was my working hypothesis in approaching what is quite disparate material about which we know almost nothing except for what the texts themselves and their manuscripts tell us.[112] This definition of a specific type of love-story was never intended to be all-inclusive nor was the report written as a systematic study covering the totality of Byzantine vernacular narrative texts. My methodology, as I have presented it succinctly elsewhere (Agapitos 1998b and 2001), rests on the assumption that we are allowed to remove parts of the material from their broader context in order to examine them and then to reposition these segments in their broader context. Obviously, a different definition of "story matter" would result in a different choice of texts; this is made quite clear by the questions Cupane, Moennig and Odorico asked about the narratives of *Apollonius, Alexander* and *Digenis Akritis* or the doubts raised by Jeffreys and Nilsson about translations such as the *War of Troy* and the *Theseid*.

The coherent picture of development in genre, structure and poetics in the report serves as a logical framework to study the material from a specific perspective with the rules clearly laid out. It is my firm conviction that such a framework is an essential prerequisite of scholarly research and philosophical

[112] Western Medievalists face similar problems, since the term "romance" (*romanz*) gradually came to incorporate a variety of texts with a prominent or less prominent connection to chivalric story matter; see Vinaver 1971 and Frappier-Grimm 1979.

inquiry. In fact, this was affirmed by the comments of the participants since they were in a position to criticize with ease the picture I drew and to add their own choices of texts into this picture by introducing different points of view. I readily agree that in a broader discussion of narrative in Late Byzantium, all the texts I left out should be included, be they the various redactions of the *Digenis Akritis*, the colossal *War of Troy* with its reconstruction of the Graecotrojan mythological past, but also the *Tale of Belisarius* or the humorous tales about birds and beasts. However, I have not been convinced that *DigAkr* or *WoT* are *in rebus eroticis* of the same story matter as the texts I discussed. Undoubtedly, the production of texts is situated in continuously developing literary traditions and ever-changing social contexts. Similarly, the boundaries between texts are less clearly marked than as if they were displayed like objects behind a museum showcase. Within this fluid process of reception, texts establish a multiplicity of inter- and intratextual relations that propel the creation of new works. It is this network of dialogic relations that allows for elements from different textual types to be interwoven in the fabric of a specific work, such as the *ekphraseis* or ethical maxims in *DigAkr* **G**, the poetological and erotic discourse in *WoT*, or the acritic motifs in *V&C* and *Ach* **N**. But do such intertextual dialogues make these four texts similar? Do they belong to the same generic category?

This brings me to the thorny issue of genre. Five of the participants expressed in varying degrees their doubts about (a) whether the poets and their audiences in Late Byzantium could have had a sense for the genre I have called "erotic tale", and (b) whether the peculiar term *arche* could actually signify the specific subgenre I have indicated that it does. These doubts are based (a) on the assumption that titles, headings and other types of peritexts cannot be safe guides to the aesthetic notions of the Byzantines, and (b) on the fact that the use of terms such as *diegesis, aphegesis* and *arche* is not fully consistent in the texts. Indeed, it would be impossible to extract a consistent system of terminology from this evidence. In my opinion, the reason does not lie in the lack of perceptions of genre in Byzantium, but in that, when such perceptions are not expressed by means of the established terminology inculcated in school education through the rhetorical handbooks of Late Antiquity, they are *created in practice* and are by necessity variegated like the "genre" they come to denote. This is also the situation with other genres that developed outside the school canons, for example, hagiography; Hinterberger in his comment described very well the difficulties in classifying such texts faced by the Byzantines themselves in the fourteenth century. Now, an overall distinction between two groups of love stories is established in the manuscripts and the term *arche* is used for one of them, even if the term

might simultaneously fulfil other functions, as Cupane and Moennig rightly pointed out. The variations in terminology to be found in the different redactions of the texts, such as between *Ach* **N** and **O** or *I&M* **N** and **V**, also reflect different realizations of the story matter.

My presentation of the love romances was viewed as too strict in relation to the openness of genre and its capacity for protean transformation. Surely, it is our right to paint the whole canvas of a genre according to our theoretical understanding of what genre is. However, we should be conscious of the distinction between our concept of genre and the potential concepts of the age that created the texts we study. In the report, I tried to cull from the available evidence what little indications we have as to the perceptions of the Byzantines concerning such texts as the "tales of love" and to see if some sense can be made out of these intra- and extratextual indications. I do not consider this a futile exercise, because such an approach allows us to broaden our interpretative perspectives by checking our critical discourse against the historical evidence. I was myself surprised at the picture I saw while studying the material and, so, I changed my own opinions of twelve years ago, as Nilsson discovered.

The analysis of the eight texts, based on a new chronological scheme, has resulted in a different picture about the genre of "erotic tale", while bringing out the conscious craftmanship of the poets in dealing with the conventions they found and which they developed and reshaped. That was my point about the position of *L&R* as a key text in the picture. The anonymous poet exploited the achievements of the Komnenian novelists and shaped a new text out of existing matter. This is how I perceive his innovative poetics and narrative techniques. The novelty in the poetics of "awe-inspiring mystery" in *L&R* lies not in the invention of this concept, but in its appropriation for a type of text, that of the vernacular romance, associated by previous scholars not with conscious literary artistry but with "folk" poetry. *L&R* is a text that to me appears both conventional and innovative, not unsimilar to Nikephoros Blemmydes' autobiographical *Partial Account* (1264/65). I consider the peculiar mixture accomplished in these two contemporary texts as indicative for the Laskarid era, a period of uneasy change and transition. And that is why I fully agree with Jeffreys, when she points out that one should look into how the manuscripts of twelfth-century rhetoric prepared by or commissioned for Nicaean intellectuals might have played a role in the formation of the *L&R*-poet. I have made some tentative suggestions as to this in two previous studies (Agapitos 1998a, 126–127 and Agapitos 2002, 208–209), as well as in the report itself (end of section IV).

The fact that most participants concentrated on genre is an obvious indication that this specific topic represents a major *desideratum* of research,

not only in the case of the romances but for the whole of Byzantine literature. As far as genre and the vernacular romances are concerned, we have nothing comparable to the studies published over the past twenty years for the French romances.[113] But even in the case of "non-vernacular" genres such as hagiography or epistolography, we are far removed from having presented broader hermeneutic proposals. Thus, we need to combine a historical research into the Byzantine perceptions of genre and a theoretical inquiry into the nature of genre in Byzantium. What I have tried to do in the report's section on genre, was to draw attention to the fact that the Byzantines did have a sense for "tales of love" as a literary category, even if these texts did not belong to the rhetorical canon of genres inherited from Antiquity. It is exactly the sense that Photios shows in his *Bibliotheca* when he discusses "novelistic" texts or when he distinguishes between "history" and "chronography" (for the latter, see Karpozilos 2002, 30–33). We may interpret this sense in different ways, but we cannot ignore it, because it is a formative force in the reception of literature, as Papaioannou has shown in the case of the "reconstruction" of Gregory Nazianzen by John Doxapatres and Michael Psellos in the eleventh century.

This reconstruction of Gregory as a Byzantine model of rhetoric is a good example for the notion and function of canon. Objections were raised by some of the participants to my proposal that *L&R* became a canonical text for the writers of erotic narrative in the Palaiologan period and that *Achilleid* **N** represents a deviation from this canon. But, on the one hand, the extreme intertextual dialogue established by the *Consolatory Fable* and *On Chastity* with *L&R* **α** is an indication for the prominent status of this particular romance, as is, of course, the high number of its surviving manuscripts and fragments. On the other hand, the author of *Ach* **N** used such different material, as the Hellenic story matter, the acritic motifs and the tragic end together with various devices developed in *L&R*, such as the "letter-and-song" episode or the extreme presence of authorial comments. I understand this mixture in *Ach* **N** as an attempt to build upon the achievents of *L&R* in order to create a new type of love story, just as the poet of *L&R* had done with his Komnenian predecessors. The simultaneous presence in the fourteenth century of texts like *L&R* and the *Achilleid* together with the *WoT* and the *DigAkr* clearly reflects the Jaußian network hinted at by Nilsson, but it does

[113] One might mention here, indicatively, the following: Brownlee-Brownlee 1985 (a very good collection of papers), Gaunt 1995 (a thought-provoking monograph exploring "gender" as a tool for looking at genre), Schmolke-Hasselmann 1998 (excellent study on the development of the verse-romances as a genre), Bruckner 2000 and Gaunt 2000 (critical essays on romance and genre).

not necessarily exclude the notions of canon and deviation from the horizon of expectations of Palaiologan audiences.

Unfortunately, we do not possess in the case of the Byzantine vernacular tales of love the kind of "romance-canon" we find embodied in the work of two outstanding poets of the late twelfth century active at the opposite ends of the medieval world. I refer to the French Chrétien de Troyes (*fl.* 1165–1191) with his five chivalric narratives (*Erec et Enide, Cligés, Le Chevalier de la Charrette, Le Chevalier au Lion* or *Yvain, Le Conte du Graal* or *Perceval*)[114] and the Persian Ilyas ibn-Yusuf Nizami Ganjavi (1141–1209) with his five narratives (*Makhzan al-asrar* ["The Treasury of Mysteries"], *Khusraw and Shirin, Layla and Majnun, Haft Paykar* ["The Seven Images"], *Iskandarnameh* ["The Book of Alexander"]).[115] Both authors appropriated a variety of narrative traditions and of story matter (some of it connected to the Greek and Byzantine worlds), developed an intense erotic discourse combined with exquisite lyric poetry, concerned themselves with issues of faith and religion, employed ironic subversion and, thus, created for their respective societies a set of literary models that became paramount points of reference in subsequent times. Moreover, their respective "quintets" were not only united in single volumes, but were also richly illustrated for their admiring readers, books that served as textual and visual paradigms of narrative art.[116] The fact that in two other medieval narrative traditions we find such canons, allows us, despite the quantitavely restricted material from Palaiologan Byzantium, to view *L&R* as serving a similar function, irrespective of whether my proposal to date this romance to the end of the Laskarid era in Nicaea is accepted or not, since the evidence clearly suggests that *L&R* had been written at the latest in the fourth decade of the fourteenth century.

This brings me once again to the issue of manuscripts and, more specifically, to the question of the rubrics found in the codices. Cupane is quite right in pointing out that rubrics do appear in the manuscripts of the Western medieval romances, where, in connection with other evidence, they

[114] The bibliography on Chrétien is vast; indicatively, one might refer to the following: Busby 1998 (excellent overview of scholarship on Chrétien in the past twenty years), Kay 1996 (on the author's *persona*), Lacy 1980 (on Chrétien's narrative art), Kelly 1985 (excellent collective volume), Bruckner 1993 (on Chrétien's poetics and the creation of a romance-canon).

[115] On Nizami, see Chelkowski 1995; on his poetry, see Talattof-Clinton 2001, on his romances, Seyed-Gohrab 2003. With the exception of *Makhzan al-asrar*, his other four narratives have been well translated into German by Rudolph Gelpke and Johann Christoph Bürgel in the "Manesse Bibliothek der Weltliteratur" (Zurich); see also Chelkowski 1975.

[116] On Chrétien, see Busby-Nixon-Stones-Walters 1993 and Hindman 1994; on Nizami, see Welch 1976, 71–97 and Stchoukine 1977.

have been used to map out the reception of these texts by their first and subsequent audiences. Studies of the manuscripts of the twelfth-century French and German verse-romances have shown that, initially, no rubrics were included in the copies prepared, because the texts were intended to be read aloud to an audience of listeners. It is in the later thirteenth century that the practice of rubrication began and in many instances these rubrics were related to illustrations in manuscripts, prepared for aristocratic patrons but also for bourgeois readers in the subsequent two centuries.[117]

This situation does not constitute a parallel to the manuscripts of Byzantine erotic fiction.[118] Already in the case of the Komnenian novels, rubrics belonged to the original composition as part of the visual layout of the text presented to the patron in an especially prepared dedicatorial copy. This explains the consistent presence of rubrics in all thirteenth-century manuscripts of the Komnenian novels, as well as the reference to textual and visual interplay in Prodromos' dedicatory epigrams to his aristocratic patron. The practice of rubrication for accentuating the structure and content of a text can be traced back to the luxury copies written since the ninth century for various works, mostly contemporary with the codices prepared.[119] Their very presence in exactly those manuscripts of the Komnenian novels that I have associated with the Laskarid court at Nicaea, makes it more than probable that rubrics were taken over by the author of *L&R* as a constitutive part of a tale of love. Their crucial narrative function, for example, in the division of the romance's chapters makes them indispensable for a comprehension of the text's structure. The gradual restriction of their presence in the later romances suggests that they were no longer necessarily perceived as an organic part of a textual and visual entity. Thus, their presence or absence is not an indication of whether the texts were originally intended to be recited in front of an audience or to be read by individual recipients.

[117] For the above, see Huot 1987, Bumke 1986 and Green 1994 on French and German romances, respectively (all studies include substantial bibliographies), as well as the overviews by Huot 2000 and Rasmussen 2000.

[118] It is quite instructive to see how, for example, the rubrics added in the later thirteenth century to Guillaume de Loris' *Le Roman de la Rose* (ca. 1225–1240) function as a commentary to the original text and connect it to its continuation by Jean de Meun (ca. 1270–1280); see the excellent analysis by Huot 1987, 90–95. These prose rubrics (edited by Huot 1987, 339–342 from the MS Paris, Bibliothèque National, fonds français 378 of the late thirteenth century) bear no resemblance to the verse rubrics of *L&R* or *K&C*.

[119] Indicatively, one might mention the Parisinus gr. 923 (early 9th c.) of the *Sacra Parallela* of John of Damascus, the Athous Vatopedinus 408 (middle of 10th c.) of the *Homilies* of Leo VI, the Vaticanus gr. 666 (early 12th c.) of the *Panoplia Dogmatike* of Euthymios Zygabenos.

However, I think that the vocabulary concerning the acts of writing, reading and reciting in the texts can be used as an indicator for the potential "performance" of a romance in front of an audience. The crucial question here is not whether a text was only listened to or only read, but whether it was from the start written to be recited as well as to be read.[120] As I have pointed out in the report, the specific book structure of the twelfth-century novels, some of their rhetorical devices and the information we have for recitation in the "literary salons" of various Komnenian aristocrats, suggest that these texts were first recited to their patrons and then read as books. In my opinion, the original *L&R* (as reflected in redaction **α**) was conceived to function in a similar way. The abandonment of book structure in the later texts and the development of larger narrative units with cross-references to previous points in the narrative (see above n. 63 of the report), suggest that these romances were written from the start to be read as books held in the recipient's hands. The characterization of the narrative as both "oral" and "written" in *Ach* **N** captures the simultaneous presence of different types of reception, now employed as literary devices, but it does not, in my opinion, cancel the possibility of a process of development as the structural differences between *L&R* **α** and *L&R* **V** or between *K&C* and *F&P* show.[121]

In sum, much work needs to be done in many different areas concerning the study of the Byzantine vernacular tales of love. Yet, as Lauxtermann indicated, a pressing objective should be to open up the perspective of inquiry to areas beyond the scope of these specific texts. Lauxtermann's own suggestion about the presence of erotic discourse outside strictly "erotic" texts in the twelfth century is one such avenue for broader analyses within Byzantine literature. Another approach, opening our theoretical perspectives, is Papaioannou's thoughts on fictionality as a changing alterity grounded in the recipient's self in the case of the Komnenian novels and as an absolute alterity situated outside the recipient's self in the case of the Palaiologan romances.[122] Personally, I would like to stress the importance of comparative approaches to other medieval narratives. A first impetus was given by Cupane

[120] This was exactly the criticism raised against the important study of Scholz 1980 concerning the acts of hearing and reading as reflected in the German romances of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (see Green 1994, 10–12).

[121] For a detailed analysis of these issues, based on all surviving Byzantine erotic fiction, I refer to Agapitos 2004c.

[122] Papaioannou's proposal finds, I think, support in the *eponymity* of the Komnenian authors, who are active agents in the elitist culture of the twelfth century, and the *anonymity* of the Palaiologan poets, who appear only as narrating voices of a didactic discourse (see also Agapitos 2004b).

in a series of studies (1973/74, 1978, 1986) concerning thematic migrations from the French romance tradition, and Pecoraro (1982) concerning Arabic and Persian tales. The time has come to move beyond the examination of genetic influence and to go into detailed textual comparisons and interpretative proposals about, for example, iconography, poetics, gender roles, social ideologies, narrative organization, performance or even the function of rubrics. This requires a more systematic familiarity with the respective material and, obviously, such familiarity is easier to achieve in the case of the Western romances than of the Eastern tales, not only because of the languages involved, but also because of the much deeper study of the Western Middle Ages since the nineteenth century. Yet, as recent studies on epic narratives and dreambooks have shown (Ott 2000 and Mavroudi 2002, respectively), the results of such detailed comparisons between Byzantine and Arabic texts can be quite staggering.[123] The position of Byzantine culture between the East and the West during the Middle Ages is for me its greatest advantage in becoming the fertile ground for interdisciplinary approaches, and the "narrative of love" is an ideal area where scholars of different fields might finally meet.

Department of Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies
University of Cyprus

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[123] The somewhat fanciful comparison of the Hellenistic novels to the eleventh-century Persian tales of love conducted by Davis 2002 could have led to far more productive results if the comparisons had been drawn with the respective Byzantine texts. I owe the knowledge of Davis' study to the kindness of Tomas Hägg.

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