

## INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

**The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.** Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

ProQuest Information and Learning  
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA  
800-521-0600

**UMI<sup>®</sup>**



A

VISUALIZING MEDIEVAL OTHERWORLDS  
IN GRECO-BYZANTINE ROMANCES

by

CHRISTINA CHRISTOFORATOU

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University  
of New York

2003

UMI Number: 3103094

Copyright 2003 by  
Christoforatos, Christina

All rights reserved.

UMI<sup>®</sup>

---

UMI Microform 3103094

Copyright 2003 by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.

All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against  
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

---

ProQuest Information and Learning Company  
300 North Zeeb Road  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

© 2003

CHRISTINA CHRISTOFORATOU

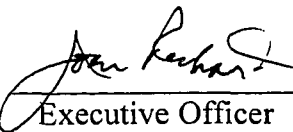
All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in English in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.


8 April 2003  
Date

  
Chair of Examining Committee

8 April 2003  
Date

  
Executive Officer

William Coleman 

Glenn Burger   
Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

4

**Abstract****Visualizing Medieval Otherworlds in Greco-Byzantine Romances****by****Christina Christoforatu****Advisor: Professor Scott D. Westrem**

In this dissertation I examine language's ability to generate imagery and to convey multifarious landscapes through the study of ekphrasis, a rhetorical trope that evolved into a staple of medieval Greek romance. Ekphrases of Levantine otherworlds are literary mines of cultural and historical information: they weave into a detailed narrative, information that ranges in origin from the realm of the purely historical to that of the writers' fertile imagination. They also provide unusually clear insight into medieval Greek writers' perceptions of their immediate surroundings, daily life, yearnings, anxieties, and fears; thus, my study of such descriptions brings to the fore the socio-political desires, cultural needs, and literary sensibilities of Greek people in the Middle Ages.

I examine the Greek novelistic romances (100 BC-300 AD) and their Byzantine successors, the romances of the Komnenian and Palaiologan periods (1081-1185 and 1204-1453, respectively) in light of the literary and cultural influences that permeated the genre, particularly after the establishment of

Christianity as a prominent religion in the Levant, perceiving the Greek romances as products of the intellectual life of the early Roman Empire.

In the first two chapters I explore the interpretive possibilities ekphrasis offers to a contemporary understanding of medieval Levantine otherworlds (utopian, dystopian, real or imaginary) that are described in the early Greek and Byzantine romances. In addition, I study the evolution of idealized pagan locations or enclosed gardens of desire from their early appearance in detailed narrative passages in the Greek novelistic romances, to their Christian appropriation in the Komnenian and Palaiologan romances. Here I focus on the allegorical shift in the projection of utopias and enclosed gardens in an effort to reveal historical, cultural, and religious influences that necessitated such a change.

In chapters three and four I examine the narrative expression of marvelous and sublime episodes in both genres—the Greek novelistic romances and their Byzantine successors. I also examine how the Greek novelistic romances and their Byzantine successors project fantastic and dystopian otherworlds—here I focus on dystopian descriptions and those events (natural or supernatural) and agents (human or divine) that make the existence of such fictional places possible.

## Acknowledgements

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Scott Westrem who directed my dissertation and inspired my enthusiasm for the study of medieval cartography and travel-narrative. Without his unwavering support, which was both intellectually challenging and emotionally nourishing, I would never have completed this project. I would also like to thank my advisory committee, which gave me the freedom and incentive to pursue my own research: Professor William Coleman encouraged me to research the Byzantine romance and introduced me to medieval codicology and manuscript illumination; Professor Glenn Burger offered valuable insight concerning the development and organization of my dissertation in its early stages; and Professor Eric Ivison provided valuable clarifications on the subject of the Byzantine garden from an archaeological perspective.

I would also like to thank the Graduate Center of the City University of New York for its generous support in the form of the CUNY Writing Fellowship (2000-2002), and my extended family in the U.S. for its generosity and constant encouragement without which I would have given up on a goal that at times seemed out of my grasp.

While writing this dissertation I had the privilege to be surrounded by three special people who supported me intellectually and spiritually: my special thanks to Dr. Nina Bannett, for her insightful comments on my writing and inspiring wit; Bradley Fox, for his wonderful sense of humor and encouragement when the project seemed unmanageable; and to my beloved fiancée, Robert

Konstantinis, for his unwavering trust and friendship that sustained me at difficult times.

My most heartfelt thanks go to my parents, Angeliki and Dimitri, for their unconditional love and abiding faith that set me on my path. This dissertation is a token of appreciation for the sacrifices they have made for my dreams throughout the years.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my beloved grandmother, Kallirhoe Papastamatatou.

## Table of Contents

	<b>Acknowledgements</b>	vi
	<b>Table of Primary Sources</b>	ix
	<b>Table of Text Abbreviations</b>	x
	<b>Introduction</b>	1
<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	<i>Res and Verbum: Ekphrastic Means of Expressing the Other</i>	32
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	The Garden in the Byzantine Romances: From <i>Locus Amoenus</i> and <i>Paradisus Terrestris</i> to an Allegorical Garden	72
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	<i>Mirabile Dictu</i> : Marvelous and Sublime Manifestations in the Hellenistic and Byzantine Romances	129
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	Utopias or Dystopias? Considering the Sinister Twist	190
	<b>Appendix A</b>	
	Synopses of the Greek Novelistic Romances	256
	<b>Appendix B</b>	
	Synopses of 12 <sup>th</sup> Century Byzantine Romances: 1081-1185	306
	Synopses of Vernacular Byzantine Romances: 1204-1453	328
	<b>Works Cited</b>	
	Primary Sources	346
	Secondary Sources	349

**TABLE of PRIMARY SOURCES**  
**GREEK NOVELISTIC ROMANCES<sup>1</sup>**

<u>Works</u>	<u>Authors</u>	<u>Approximate Dates</u>
1. <i>Aithiopeka / An Ethiopian Story</i>	Heliodorus	Mid 3 <sup>rd</sup> -or 4 <sup>th</sup> c.
2. <i>The Alexander Romance</i>	Pseudo-Callisthenes	2 <sup>nd</sup> -3 <sup>rd</sup> c.
3. <i>Apollonius, King of Tyre</i>	Anonymous	5 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup> c.
4. <i>The Ass</i>	Pseudo-Lucian	~2 <sup>nd</sup> c.
5. <i>Chaereas and Callirhoe</i>	Chariton	Mid 1 <sup>st</sup> c.
6. <i>Daphnis and Chloe</i>	Longus	Late 2 <sup>nd</sup> c.
7. <i>An Ephesian Tale</i>	Xenophon of Ephesus	Early 2 <sup>nd</sup> c.
8. <i>Leucippe and Clitophon</i>	Achilles Tatius	Mid 2 <sup>nd</sup> c.
9. <i>A True Story</i>	Lucian	Late 2 <sup>nd</sup> c.
10. <i>The Wonders Beyond Thule</i>	Antonius Diogenes	Mid 2 <sup>nd</sup> c.
<b>GREEK FRAGMENTS of Novelistic Romances</b>		
11. <i>Calligone</i>	Anonymous	2 <sup>nd</sup> c.
12. <i>Chione</i>	Anonymous	2 <sup>nd</sup> c.
13. <i>Herpyllis</i>	Anonymous	Early 2 <sup>nd</sup> c.
14. <i>Iolaus</i>	Anonymous	2 <sup>nd</sup> c.
15. <i>Metiochus and Parthenope</i>	Anonymous	Unknown
16. <i>Ninus</i>	Anonymous	100BC-100AD
17. <i>A Phoenician Story</i>	Anonymous	2 <sup>nd</sup> c.
18. <i>Sesonchosis</i>	Anonymous	2 <sup>nd</sup> c.
<b>12<sup>th</sup> CENTURY BYZANTINE ROMANCES<sup>2</sup></b>		
1. <i>Aristandros and Kallithea</i>	Konstantinos Manasses	1143-1152
2. <i>Digenes Akrites</i>	Anonymous	1100
3. <i>Drosilla and Charikles</i>	Niketas Eugenianos	1156 or earlier
4. <i>Hysmine and Hysminias</i>	Eustathios Makrembolites	~ 1180
5. <i>Rhodanthe and Dosikles</i>	Theodore Prodromos	1143-1149
<b>VERNACULAR BYZANTINE ROMANCES: 1204 – 1453<sup>3</sup></b>		
6. <i>Belthandros and Chrysantza</i>	Anonymous	Unknown
7. <i>Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe</i>	Andronikos Komnenos Doukas Angelos Palaiologos	1310-1340
8. <i>Libistros and Rhodamne</i>	Anonymous	Unknown
9. <i>The Tale of Achilles</i>	Anonymous	Unknown
10. <i>The Tale of Troy</i>	Anonymous	Unknown
<b>TRANSLATIONS OR ADAPTATIONS of Western Romances</b>		
1. <i>Apollonios of Tyre</i>	Anonymous	1350-1450
2. <i>Boccaccio's Teseida</i>	Anonymous	Late 15 <sup>th</sup> c.
3. <i>Imperios and Margarona</i>	Anonymous	Post 1453
4. <i>Phlorios and Platzia-Phlora</i>	Anonymous	Unknown
5. <i>The Tale of Belisarios</i>	Anonymous	Unknown
6. <i>The War of Troy</i>	Anonymous	~ 1350

<sup>1</sup> The heyday of the Greek novelistic romance is the 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD.

<sup>2</sup> These romances were written under the rule of the Komnenian Dynasty (1081-1185).

<sup>3</sup> The vernacular Byzantine romances are also referred to as Palaiologan romances (1204-1453).

## TABLE OF TEXT ABBREVIATIONS

The following is an alphabetical list (also arranged by period) of all Greek texts used in this dissertation with abbreviated forms of reference in square brackets.

### GREEK NOVELISTIC ROMANCES

- |   |          |
|---|----------|
| 1. <i>Aithiopeka / An Ethiopian Story</i> | [Aith.]  |
| 2. <i>The Alexander Romance</i>           | [AR]     |
| 3. <i>Apollonius, King of Tyre</i>        | [Apol.]  |
| 4. <i>The Ass</i>                         | [Ass]    |
| 5. <i>Chaereas and Callirhoe</i>          | [Call.]  |
| 6. <i>Daphnis and Chloe</i>               | [Daph.]  |
| 7. <i>An Ephesian Tale</i>                | [Ephes.] |
| 8. <i>Leucippe and Clitophon</i>          | [Leuc.]  |
| 9. <i>A True Story</i>                    | [TS]     |
| 10. <i>The Wonders Beyond Thule</i>       | [WT]     |

### GREEK FRAGMENTS of Novelistic Romances

- |                                     |           |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| 11. <i>Calligone</i>                | [Callig.] |
| 12. <i>Chione</i>                   | [Chione]  |
| 13. <i>Herpyllis</i>                | [Herp.]   |
| 14. <i>Iolaus</i>                   | [Iolaus]  |
| 15. <i>Metiochus and Parthenope</i> | [MP]      |
| 16. <i>Ninus</i>                    | [Ninus]   |
| 17. <i>A Phoenician Story</i>       | [PS]      |
| 18. <i>Sesonchosis</i>              | [Seson.]  |

### 12<sup>th</sup> CENTURY GREEK ROMANCES

- |                                     |      |
|-------------------------------------|------|
| 1. <i>Aristandros and Kallithea</i> | [AK] |
| 2. <i>Digenes Akrites</i>           | [DA] |
| 3. <i>Drosilla and Charikles</i>    | [DC] |
| 4. <i>Hysmine and Hysminias</i>     | [HH] |
| 5. <i>Rhodanthe and Dosikles</i>    | [RD] |

### VERNACULAR GREEK ROMANCES: 1204 – 1453

- |                                       |      |
|---------------------------------------|------|
| 6. <i>Belthandros and Chrysantza</i>  | [BC] |
| 7. <i>Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe</i> | [KC] |
| 8. <i>Libistros and Rhodamne</i>      | [LR] |
| 9. <i>The Tale of Achilles</i>        | [TA] |
| 10. <i>The Tale of Troy</i>           | [TT] |

### TRANSLATIONS OR ADAPTATIONS of Western Romances

- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| 11. <i>Apollonios of Tyre</i>          | [Tyre] |
| 12. <i>Boccaccio's Teseida</i>         | [Tes.] |
| 13. <i>Imperios and Margarona</i>      | [IM]   |
| 14. <i>Phlorios and Platzia-Phlora</i> | [PP]   |
| 15. <i>The Tale of Belisarios</i>      | [TB]   |
| 16. <i>The War of Troy</i>             | [WT]   |

## INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation I consider the narrative development of the medieval Greek romance, manifested in rhetorical descriptions of eastern Mediterranean otherworlds—utopian and dystopian, real and imaginary. In each of the four chapters that follow, I focus on the narrative effects of ekphrasis, examining how writers of fiction have employed rhetorical language to generate imagery and convey multifarious landscapes. Elaborate descriptions of what I will call Greco-Byzantine “otherworlds”—which may be either utopian and dystopian—provide unusually clear insight into medieval Greek writers’ perceptions of their immediate surroundings, daily life, yearnings, anxieties, and fears; more specifically, narrative ekphrases are literary mines of cultural and historical information: they weave into descriptive narrative information that ranges in origin from the realm of the purely historical to that of the writers’ fertile imaginations.

My study of ekphrasis and its function in the narrative of the Greek romances is organized thematically into four chapters, each of which considers the diachronic development of the rhetorical mode from the late Hellenistic (100 BC-400 AD) to the late Byzantine period (1204-1453), relating the rhetorical trope to the particular theme of each chapter. In each of the following chapters, I discuss the literary and socio-historical background of Greek secular fiction (both

early Christian and Byzantine), as well as the Hellenistic heritage that influenced the narrative development of medieval Greek otherworlds found in utopian and dystopian descriptions in the Greek novelistic romances and their Byzantine successors.

For coherence and clarity, I must define several key terms I employ in the following chapters and that appear in scholarly studies of the generic controversy surrounding the ancient Greek prose-fiction and its readership. The term *Greek*, whenever it appears in my text, refers to the ancient Greek language (and only occasionally Byzantine), but never to modern Greek. I have chosen the term *novelistic romance* for the earliest Greek prose fiction that flourished during the first four centuries of the Christian era, and the term *Byzantine romance* for the verse romances that were written in Byzantium and the Mediterranean region of the Levant from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The primary sources I am considering come from two distinct chronological periods: the Greek novelistic romances of the late Hellenistic and early Roman Imperial period (AD 1<sup>st</sup>- 4<sup>th</sup> century) and the Byzantine romances of the Komnenian and Palaiologan periods, written between 1100 and the late 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>4</sup> Characteristic of most of these Greek narratives is the detailed description of subterranean locations and otherworlds of the “barbaric orient” in carefully constructed ekphrases.<sup>2</sup> I have further divided the representative

---

<sup>4</sup> For a chronological chart of both the Greek novelistic romances and the Byzantine romances, see pages viii and ix.

<sup>2</sup> *Digenes Akrites*, a 12<sup>th</sup> century epic-romance that celebrates the heroic deeds of a “twin-blooded” soldier who guards the eastern border of Byzantium against Arab attack, provides interesting narrative landscapes of the frontier between the Christian empire of Byzantium (or “Romania” as it is called in the text) and the Islamic world of eastern Anatolia and Mesopotamia.

romances I have selected into four categories based in chronology: the *Greek Novelistic Romances* of AD 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries (nine of these are complete and attributed to specific authors; eight have survived only in fragments and are all anonymous)<sup>3</sup>; the *12<sup>th</sup> Century Romances* (five verse romances, only one of which is not attributed to a particular author), written in Byzantium under the rule of the Komnenian Dynasty (1081-1185); the *Vernacular Greek Romances* (also known as Palaiologan Romances) of 1204-1453, four anonymous and one eponymous romances also written within the confines of Byzantium; and six anonymous novels that are considered to be *translations or adaptations* of Western Romances and are particularly rich in intertextual thematic development.

Five Greek novelistic romances have survived complete from the Roman Imperial period. These are Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe* [CC] (the earliest of all five extant Greek novelistic romances), Xenophon's *Ephesian Tale* [ET], Achilles Tatius's *Leucippe and Clitophon* [LC], Longus's *Daphnis and Chloe* [Daph.], and Heliodorus's *Ethiopian Story* (also known as *Aithiopika*) [Aith.]. In addition, we know of still eight other novelistic romances by title only and from summaries in other works.

---

<sup>3</sup> The term *novelistic romance* whenever used in this dissertation refers to an entirely fictitious story narrated in prose and ruled in its course by erotic motifs and a series of adventures which mostly take place during a journey and which can be differentiated into specific, fixed patterns.

The following fragments (edited and translated in Bryan P. Reardon's *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* [1989] ) are the most important surviving remains of once complete romances that have so far been discovered: *Calligone* [Call.], *Chione* [Chione], *Herpyllis* [Herp.], *Iolaus* [Iolaus], *Metiochus and Parthenope* [MP], *Ninus* [Ninus], *A Phoenician Story* [PS], and *Sesonchosis* [Seson.]. A few even shorter fragmentary romances are also known, and given recent scholarly interest in the subject, more may well turn up in Greek manuscript collections.

There are sixteen Greek romances written between 1100 and 1400s (only five of these are attributed to a known author) that survive in whole or in part. The capture of Constantinople by the Latins in 1204 brought about the emigration of many Byzantine artists and writers. In addition, the gradual movement to the west of Turks in Asia Minor and the conquest of Byzantine islands and territories around the Adriatic and the eastern Mediterranean especially by Europeans—Latin Christians—significantly reduced the size of the Byzantine Empire. As a result, several of the late medieval Greek romances were written outside Byzantium in foreign territory, in what had once been the fringes of the Empire: on the islands of Crete and Rhodes, for example, and in enclave communities the Greeks established at Nicaea, Trepizond, Arta, and Thessalonica.

During the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries substantial Greek-speaking populations lived outside of the Byzantine Empire and contributed noteworthy additions to the significant body of romances already produced within the confines of the Roman Empire.<sup>4</sup> For instance, the lasting appeal of the anonymous proto-romance *Digenes Akrites* was the result of a particularly rich and widespread oral tradition in the form of ballads and folktales that preceded the composition of the early 12<sup>th</sup> century romance in Greek-speaking communities along the eastern

---

<sup>4</sup> Byzantine territory was constantly in flux: in 560 it included territory along the entire Mediterranean coastline, from Spain to Palestine; during subsequent centuries, however, “it shrank first to a state occupying only the Balkans and northeastern Mediterranean, then to a state surrounding the Aegean Sea, and finally a tiny domain on the Bosphorus” (*The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 1: 345).

coast of Asian Minor and the Dodecanese.<sup>5</sup> After 1461, however, the Ottoman Turks controlled the entire territory where Greek had once been spoken except from Crete, the Ionian Islands, the Dodecanese, Cyprus, and a few areas of lesser consequence. All of these had come under the control of western European powers and remained so for at least a few more decades.

The medieval Greek romance returned to life after a hiatus of almost eight hundred years (from the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, when the novel as a literary form swiftly lost its appeal in Alexandria, to the early 12<sup>th</sup> century, when the genre reemerged in the somewhat refined form of the Byzantine romance). The Greek romance flourished once again in Constantinople, Alexandria, and other prominent Greek-speaking cities in the Levant.

It is no real surprise that this learned revival of the novelistic romance should take place in the 12<sup>th</sup>-century Constantinople, for the capital-city at this time was experiencing a revived climate of intellectual and creative activity that greatly enriched Byzantine culture. This reflects the relationship that may exist between literary development and socio-cultural change of the kind that 12<sup>th</sup> century Byzantium was undergoing.<sup>6</sup> The Byzantine “novelists” of the 12<sup>th</sup> through the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries were separated from their Hellenic forebears by time

---

<sup>5</sup> Some scholars of Byzantine history and folklore have argued that *political* verse—the fifteen-syllable non-rhyming verse of the Komnenian and Palaiologan romances—had its roots in traditional styles found in literary works that were part of an oral tradition long before the composition of any surviving Byzantine romance, “so that popular poems preserved from the 12<sup>th</sup> century on represent the written extension of an oral tradition” (*Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, 2: 521).

<sup>6</sup> “The end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century brought civil war and administrative collapse, ending in the capture of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade (1204). The fragmented Greek states that survived the challenge of the new Latin Empire were predisposed against vernacular experiments. Stress was put on archaic language and the study of ancient literature to emphasize the unbroken cultural tradition that, it was hoped, would bridge the temporary political interruption of the Latin Empire. The desire to reestablish legitimacy continued these pressures even beyond the recapture of Constantinople (1261). The Fourth Crusade marks

and Christianity. Nevertheless, they succeeded in adopting and deploying the discourse of the Greek novelistic romances contributing in their own way to the old genre in their act of appropriation.

After Heliodoros had written his *Aithiopeka* (also known as *Ethiopian Story*) in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, a period of eight hundred years elapsed before the genesis of *Digenes Akrites*, the first Byzantine romance of the Komnenian period. The decline of Roman imperial power and the ascending of Christianity as the official religion of the empire in the early Middle Ages affected the production of literature in Byzantium and the evolution of the Byzantine romance. Suzanne MacAlister attributes the development of the Byzantine romance to significant social and literary changes that occurred in the Mediterranean during the decline in the interim period between the decline of the Greek novelistic romance and the renaissance of the Byzantine romance.<sup>7</sup> The rise of Christianity evidently

---

a definitive break in Greek literary history. The Komnenian court had shown clear signs that imperial taste and patronage were pressing for simplicity of style and language. Circumstances seemed propitious for the development of a Greek vernacular literature to rival that of the West. By 1204, though, this line of progress was blocked, leaving the thirteenth century bare to survive popular literature. When it appears again in the fourteenth century, popular literature rarely expresses popularizing forces within the Constantinopolitan aristocracy, but becomes a largely peripheral phenomenon” (*Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, 2: 521-22).

<sup>7</sup> See *Dreams and Suicides: The Greek Novel From Antiquity to the Byzantine Empire* (1996): “Changes arose out of already established and enduring expectations and traditions which were to take on new forms and understandings being reflected in the literary microcosm of the novel with its reassembly and re-patterning of established literary components and motifs. Although people’s beliefs in the origin of supernatural power were to shift from established pagan spheres to a singly almighty Christian god, their fundamental expectations of the realm outside the earthly one changed very little throughout the period of Christianity’s rise: individuals continued to seek guidance and understanding from non-human powers towards which they continued to observe obligations and responsibilities. But what did change significantly was, as Brown puts it, ‘men’s views as to where exactly this divine power was to be found on earth, and consequently, on what terms access to it could be achieved’ (Brown 1978: 11). Such power came to be located in the Christian church and manifested in those human beings who demonstrated their value through marks which were perceptible to ordinary people and which served to stand them apart from others—marks such as sexual continence, access to God through dreams or visions, and the performance of miracles” (86 -87).

provided individuals with a new sense of social identity, a change that became particularly noticeable toward the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, when societies throughout the Mediterranean started regarding themselves as wholly Christian, perceiving the church as the focus of collective feeling.<sup>8</sup>

### *The Readership of the Greek Novelistic Romance*

The medieval Greek romance as a genre evolved slowly from the 1<sup>st</sup> century to the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, and its development can be traced on papyrus, parchment, and paper, in as many locations as there were Hellenistic communities around the eastern Mediterranean basin. The first Greek novelistic romances appealed to the affluent, educated classes of the Hellenistic cities of Asia Minor who looked back with certain nostalgia to the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries before the beginning of the Christian era.

With the great mobility of populations from the Greek-speaking cities of the Near East and Asia Minor to various Mediterranean locations, it was not long before the new genre reached Alexandria. Here, its popularity increased, as did its appeal to less privileged social classes (presumably due to the influential social topography of the Egyptian city): “the port and great city of Alexandria was a melting pot of cultures, a place where East and West really did meet; what existed here was rapidly spread in all directions. For all time, Alexandria put its mark on

---

<sup>8</sup> Christianity became the state religion in Byzantium under the rule of Emperor Theodosius in the late 4<sup>th</sup> century, but paganism long remained lively.

the genre [of the Greek novelistic romance]" (Haag 98). The sudden popularity of this new body of literature is also manifest in numerous papyrus fragments from novels (other than the five which have come down to us in complete form in the manuscript tradition) that have been discovered.<sup>9</sup>

Margaret Williamson, in "The Greek Romance," her commentary on the widespread influence of the genre, confirms that the genre enjoyed great popularity, particularly among literate populations, and even in later times, noting that it was also "widely imitated later, not only by Byzantine Greeks in the twelfth century, but also in the Renaissance, when Heliodorus, the latest of the ancient Greek romance writers, was printed in Greek and then translated into French, German, Spanish, Italian, and English within the space of forty years" (24).<sup>10</sup> The new genre's popularity is also reflected in the form in which it was reproduced. The surviving manuscripts of the original Greek novelistic romances are in codex form, rather than on the papyrus scrolls that were still being used for high literature.

As noted earlier, the Greek novelistic romances that survive in complete texts were all written by and for the Greek-speaking populations of the eastern Roman Empire during the first four centuries of the Christian era, a time of relative political stability, but also of nostalgia for Greece's gloriously independent past. Unfortunately, we have very little information about the audience that the early Greek novelistic romances attracted, except for the fact

---

<sup>9</sup> Five Greek novelistic romances have survived intact: *CC*, *Daph.*, *ET*, *ES*, and *LC*.

<sup>10</sup> Williamson's essay appears in Jean Radford's, *The Progress of Romance: The Politics of Popular Fiction* (1986).

that the readership was not exclusively female, although they appealed to women greatly, as Antonius Diogenes' dedication (of *The Wonders Beyond Thule*) to his sister indicates.<sup>11</sup> We do know, however, that, aside from their authorship, these fictional narratives were very much influenced by eastern traditions and cultural rites that have left their mark on both the plot-structure and content of the Greek romance.<sup>12</sup>

The Greek romances are typically stories about two extraordinarily beautiful young people who fall in love, but who, before they can live happily ever after, must overcome numerous temptations, hardships, and humiliations. They are stories of exciting and perilous adventures and eroticism—*erotika pathemata* (amorous sufferings) as they are also referred to by their writers. The settings of these stories are varied, and above all imaginative, even fantastical in some cases, with the fantasy ranging from nightmare to utopia. The heroic couples find themselves separated by capricious Tyche (Chance), and their separation involves perilous travel, shipwreck, and near disaster (it is customarily averted by a hair's breadth) in a variety of locations in the eastern Mediterranean and Levant—from Sicily to Babylon, from Greece to Egypt, and from Tyre to Ethiopia.

---

<sup>11</sup> Niklas Holzberg reveals that the Greek novelistic romances offer many opportunities for women readers to identify with the characters in the story, arguing, "it is not so much the central role given to female chastity that could have touched such chords—especially since this theme is more likely to have appealed to male readers with their particular hopes and fancies. Of greater interest for women readers was probably the frequent portrayal of the heroine as more alive, more active, more intelligent, and more likable than their often almost colourless lovers" (35).

<sup>12</sup> The 12<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine proto-romance *Digenes Akrites* [DA] reflects the confused world of late Byzantine society in which traditional Byzantine ideas and beliefs mingled with those both of Western Europe and the Muslim and Christian Near East. The first part of the romance, the song of the Arab emir Musur (the hero's father) was created just before c. 944 and preserves evidence of the historical situation of the eastern frontiers of the Byzantine Empire at the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

It seems that these romances offered something for all tastes. The reader looking for entertainment alone found exciting plots and assorted descriptions of foreign lands; tales of legendary heroes (from Digenes Akrites and Alexander the Great to Achilles and Paris) and pseudo-historical or quasi-fabulous accounts of their exploits permeated the locale folklore not just of the Greek-speaking diaspora communities of the Levant that were eager to establish their place within a unifying Hellenic cultural history, but even those non-Greek cultures with which they came into contact.<sup>13</sup>

B. P. Reardon, in *The Form of Greek Romance* (1991), offers a lucid description of thematic elements shared by many Greek novelistic romances, the most prominent of which are dangerous travel in known and unknown lands, separation of hero and heroine, and an intricate quest story.<sup>14</sup> Ben Edwin Perry, similarly, discerns a direct correlation between the genesis of this new genre and

---

<sup>13</sup> Codicological studies on palimpsests in particular attest to the versatile readership that the Greek novelistic romances attracted. Niklas Holzberg presents these results in *The Ancient Novel*: “The audience [of the Greek novelistic romances] probably included the businessmen whose balance sheet were, as the papyri reveal, turned over and re-used for copying novel texts. Their tastes also seem to have been shared by some of the more well-to-do; we have fragments from ‘de luxe’ editions, and mosaics found in a villa near the ancient Syrian capital Antioch depict scenes from *Ninus* and *Parthenope*. The educated reader who was well versed in literature would find in almost all of the ancient novels we have today—perhaps not in Xenophon of Ephesus, but all the more so in Heliodorus, for example—scope enough for testing his ability to recognize allusions to several centuries of Greek prose and poetic works” (34-35). Contrary to the widespread popularity of the Greek novelistic romance, contemporary criticism looks upon the medieval Greek readership of the genre with a sharp and critical eye. The “lowly romance” of love and adventure appealed to young and naïve people with very little or no education, Jean Radford, notes, “most of whom presumably lived in small towns or rural districts, rather than at Athens or in other cities, and would seldom be near a theater. These are the forgotten people of literary history. Although the expression of their taste and ideals in written form was slow in making, its appearance was long ignored by men of intellectual or literary pretensions who always look back to what is classical, yet it is to them that we owe the creation of the novel both in ancient and modern times” (56-57).

<sup>14</sup> According to Reardon, “the quest story is extensive, of epic proportions, and it is architecturally conceived: the numerous episodes, individually attractive, form not simply a linear series but a mounting climax—and they also people the story with a wealth of secondary characters against whom the figure of the hero can be measured.” He adds, “the story ends with our wish fulfilled. This issues, as in most romances, in the restoration of the hero’s identity, and in a happy ending, such as to fit the anterior story and thus be psychologically satisfying” (15-16).

the socio-historic circumstances that nourished its development. According to Perry, the spirit of the Roman Imperial times (the age of the Greek novelistic romance) was rather negative and bleak, and this new view is reflected in the plot-line of all Greek novelistic romances, in which the protagonist is alienated from the old regime of political independence in small city-states, and seeks happiness and relative stability in a world that appears alien and threatening.<sup>15</sup>

These early Greek romances are also characterized by an interest in the private life and concerns of the simple person, who had started perceiving him or herself as helpless and defenseless, looking outward “in a spirit of wonder upon the endless varieties of nature and human experience, rather than inward to the nature of man in his more universal or more heroic aspects” (Perry 7). Tomas Haag, who shares Perry’s views, also perceives this literature as a new type of prose where “[the readers] are concerned with simple adventure stories which have love, travel, and violence as their main constituents. Sometimes violence is replaced by a stronger admixture of emotions, by a marked taste for sentimentality. In both cases, however, the result is light reading for a comparatively broad audience” (3).

Most scholars agree that it is unlikely the new genre evolved from older, prominent popular genres like the epic, historiography, hagiography, and epistolography, although the influence of these genres is profound in all Greek novelistic romances. Instead, they attribute the origin and popularity of the early

---

<sup>15</sup> “The bigger the world,” Perry observes in *The Ancient Romances* (1967), “the smaller the man. Faced with the immensity of things and his own helplessness before them, the spirit of Hellenistic man became passive, and he regarded himself instinctively as the plaything of Fortune. All this is conspicuous from first to last in Greek romance” (48).

romances the intentional attempts of a “yet unknown author who responded to the political, social, and cultural upheavals of the Hellenistic age by providing an alternative world in the form of romantic fiction” (Holzberg 35).

### *On the Controversy of Genre*

There has been extensive scholarly debate concerning the genre of the Greek prose fiction I am examining, and attempts to classify these narratives under one particular genre (whether novel or romance) have proven unsatisfactory. The Greek novelistic romances appear to have emanated, at least in part, from a combination of existing Hellenistic genres, from which the novelist borrowed motifs and formal elements. The Byzantine romances of the 12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries follow a similar process of adaptation and appropriation, drawing literary and rhetorical materials from the earlier Greek novelistic romances and the genre of hagiography.<sup>16</sup>

The Greek novelistic romance (the Greek genre that emerged during the first four centuries of the Christian era) claims greater affinity to the genre of novel because it is narrative prose fiction, creative, and sufficiently similar to what contemporary readers now call novels, to justify the use of the term; yet, the generic conglomeration that characterizes ancient Greek fiction, and the Greek novelistic romances in particular, has attracted considerable attention from literary

---

<sup>16</sup> Graham Anderson, in *Ancient Fiction: the Novel in the Graeco-Roman World* (1984), comments extensively on the hybrid generic form of the Greek novelistic romances, claiming that the genre resembles “some sort of subliterate mutant pieced together from the spare parts of respectable literature in response to popular taste” (1).

critics who find the generic multiplicity of the ancient Greek novels both intriguing and tediously complex. Reardon, namely, notes that “the forms of prose fiction are mixed, like racial strains in human being, not separable like sexes. In fact, the popular demand in fiction is always for a mixed form” (4).

Some critics use the term “Alexandrian erotic romance” when referring to the genre because its literature has affinities with other genres from late antiquity, yet it can best be described as a literary amalgam of several genres, such as those of new comedy, Homeric epic, the pastoral, historiography, hagiography, and mythology.<sup>17</sup> Forty-seven echoes of Homer have been counted in Longus’ romance *Daphnis and Chloe*, and R. L. Hunter points out that some of these are deliberately ironical. Paul Turner, who has edited and translated *Daphnis and Chloe*, argues that prominent Greco-Roman poets and thespians, including “Chloe’s compatriot Sappho, Euripides, Aristophanes, Plato, Menander, and Virgil” (9-10), left significant marks on Longus’s work and concludes that by doing so, “the novelist aims to combine the pleasantness of fiction with the truthfulness and usefulness of history” (10).

Graham Anderson, in his analysis of the generic hybridity of the Greek genre, presents the novelistic romances as embodiments of ancient history and local legend, arguing that “we can trace individual motifs in Epic, Tragedy, New Comedy, historiography, or rhetorical exercise, and a good deal more besides; and we can ‘account’ for the novel in various fusions of such elements” (3). The

---

<sup>17</sup> Roderick Beaton, in his extensive study of the genre in *The Medieval Greek Romance*, concludes that the Greek novelistic romances are “among the first extended attempts to write secular fiction in medieval Europe, and as such their connections with the literature on the other are of particular importance” (52).

ancient Greek and Byzantine romances, however, are so ubiquitous that they readily dispense with specific formal characteristics, and even though these romances were not thought to merit the serious attention of the cultivated elite, they did flourish and spread widely.<sup>18</sup> Literary critics who have studied and analyzed the generic amalgam of Greek prose fiction view the new genre as a successor to stage-drama on a popular level, addressed to a reading public—the new genre had certain literary features, although they were not as well-developed and integrated into the work as the characteristics of genres of more conventional and traditional order, such as those of epic, and new comedy.

The Greek novelistic romance appears to have derived from practically every available literary form that is in some way narrative, namely, “epic, Hellenistic historiography, the novella, fantastic travel tales, love poetry, folk stories and other types of popular narrative, from drama—particularly from comedy and mime—and from school exercises in rhetoric [*progymnasmata*]” (Holzberg 29). Evidently, all that the writers of the Greek novelistic romances needed to create a new, dramatic story of love and adventure was “a name or a group of names which [were] known to history, legend, or obscure myth, even when the actions ascribed to such characters by tradition, were often vague and meager [were] contradictory to what the romancer chose to tell about them. This

---

<sup>18</sup> In his study of the genesis and development of ancient Greek prose fiction in *Secular Scripture*, Northrop Frye comments on the widespread influence of the Greek novelistic romances in spite of socio-political and cultural odds: “Whatever the circumstances of its genesis, whatever the nature of its reception in antiquity and in modern times, the ancient romance did arise. Creative artists are not dependent on academic approval. A priori it seems unlikely that antiquity would not have made its way sooner or later to the structural core of all fiction” (15).

is the method,” Reardon concludes, “by which romances were invented in Greek antiquity no less than in the Middle Ages” (151).

However, the Greek novelistic romances are not merely a literary phenomenon: unlike any previous genre, they successfully offer a coherent imagined world (utopian or sinister, depending on the narrative circumstances) that had maximum appeal to the public that read them.<sup>19</sup> They are effective popular stories that offer adventure “not the less interesting for being often improbable, and a romantic vision of life whose attraction lies precisely in that quality of romance” (Reardon 12).

In the subsequent chapters, in conjunction to the theme of each chapter, I will explore significant social changes that underlie an aesthetic need for the imaginary and the utopian in the medieval Greek romances. The narratives of the Greek novelistic romances express both a social and a personal view of the world and the individual in it—a private individual often isolated and insecure in a world too big for him, who finds his security and identity in the love and adventure narrated in these romances.<sup>20</sup> The cultural and intellectual soil in which the new genre grew was, undoubtedly, different from that of the older genres that

---

<sup>19</sup> “The romance is nearest of all literary forms to the wish-fulfillment dream,” Northrop Frye claims in *The Anatomy of Criticism*, adding that “for that reason it has socially a curiously paradoxical role. In every age the ruling social or intellectual class tends to project its ideals in some form of romance where the virtuous heroes and beautiful heroines represent the ideals and the villains the threats to the ascentery” (186).

<sup>20</sup> Reardon, explores the socio-historical background that affected the conception and development of the new genre in his second chapter of *The Form of Romance*, observing that “while local life was assuredly busy, in the wider complex of the cosmopolitan Greek world this was no longer the compact culture of Old Comedy, in which a man could aspire to having an effective voice in controlling his own social existence in his own autonomous community; now there was a large-scale, open society, in which the individual cut a much smaller figure, was swallowed up and lost in the mass [. . .] as we may feel lost in today’s large scale open society. Chariton’s story was written for those who lived in that world, and it reflects that world and its inhabitants, their situation, their anxieties, their aspirations” (28).

left their traces on the Greek novelistic romance, and hence the evolution of Greek prose fiction.

The growing appeal of the Greek novelistic romance during the Hellenistic period can perhaps be better understood when placed against a cultural and intellectual milieu that made its conception and development possible. Classical scholars such as Albin Lesky have observed that even though the rhetoric of the Second Sophistic period<sup>21</sup> affected the narrative flow of the incidents and adventures in the Greek novelistic romances—ekphrasis being its hallmark—the themes, plots, and adventures of the genre stem from classical literature.

Traveling adventures and the passion of love in particular are stock subjects of the Hellenistic romances, and one can easily trace obvious connections to the *Odyssey*, the *Iliad*, and even Herodotus' pseudo-historical accounts. Lesky argues that the vivid interest of the Greeks (especially the Ionians) in faraway countries “explains the reason why genuine information and fabulous report found an equally ready hearing” (859). In addition to this interest for adventure, legends and pseudo-historical accounts that flowed into the Greek world after Alexander's expedition, gave rise to a literary need for the composition of adventurous literature—after all, Alexander's expedition itself became a romance with an breadth of influence that had hitherto been unequaled.

In addition to the influence of epic on the Hellenistic romances, drama

---

<sup>21</sup> The Second Sophistic, a period of great intellectual activity, began in the last decades of the first century C.E. (less than a half a century after the destruction of the great library at Alexandria) and flourished in the second, declining thereafter. It was characterized by an emphasis of rhetoric and an attempt to reproduce Attic language but in new forms, notably, the romance. The high level of literary activity heralded by the Second Sophistic lasted about five centuries.

also left a remarkable impression on the new literature as literature came to redefine the role of the erotic element in them. Passion in drama serves an edificatory purpose and is hardly ever present for mere entertainment purposes. Similarly, in the Greek novelistic romances, love is nearly always a great passion that consumes, but only the secondary characters give in to their guilty passion. The protagonists of the romances, on the contrary, are bound by a great and pure love, which is often love-at-first-sight. “The goal which is reached by the misunderstandings and confusion,” Lesky adds, “is not a fleeing pleasure, but the lasting union of two hearts which need one another” (859).

It is worth noting here that the readers of the Greek novelistic romances did not share our modern distinction between history and fiction: the kind of distinction contemporary readers try to draw between myth and legend or between legend and history are likely to be anachronistic when applied to the ancient Greek novel: “there is little scope for rigid distinction,” Anderson notes, “between history, pseudo-history and quasi-history [in the Greek novelistic romances]. Events may be presented as the writer thought they happened, as he would like his reader to think they happened, or as he and his reader might imagine that some events could have happened” (88). Aside from the highly imaginative and idealistic element that runs strong throughout the narrative of the Greek novelistic romances, however, the writers of the genre also reveal an external, objective world of their own time, which is worth studying;<sup>22</sup> they might not do so directly

---

<sup>22</sup> “In the Hellenistic age the individual has been cut loose from the state of which he was once an integral part but which is no longer a controlling force in his life, so that what concerns him privately, apart from any group-relationship, is now of paramount interest” (Perry 60).

(by writing about it), but they do indirectly, as Reardon suggests, “by writing ‘in’ it [their own time] and consciously reflecting in it, its assumptions, its aspirations by simply appearing and working in that given time and place. In short, the ancient romance is interesting both as an artistic and as a social phenomenon” (13).

The Greek novelistic romance came into existence out of a public need for a new form of literary entertainment—the fictional stories of the Greek novelistic romances are reflections of their own times, of the physical and cultural conditions which evoked them, for they embody a personal, human experience that transcends specific social patterns, needs, and conditions. The popular entertainment that had previously been offered to the public in the form of drama on the stage (and only occasionally in the larger cities of Athens, Epidaurus, and Olympia) was not available to everyone who wished it. Thus, that which some critics have described as “simplistic melodrama,” and “primitive travel narrative” in these novelistic romances offers more literary possibilities than scholars have previously credited. The writers of the early Greek novelistic romances represent in their narratives a wide world in which for the first time they openly disclose human mysteries of life, love, fear and hope for a terrestrial utopia: what these writers represent is a threatening world, and in it an ideal of life that “for all the simplistic melodrama of the writing and the *naivete* of the people whose actions are set out, offers a structure as valid as that of drama” (Reardon 101).

The Greek novelistic romance was, and remains, a captivating genre. Unlike older enduring genres, such as classical drama, it extends its action beyond

the polis into the Mediterranean world, where the obstacles that divide the hero and heroine become greater and more dangerous. The protagonists are separated not only from each other but also from their surroundings, as fortune drives them back and forth, from place to place. *An Ephesian Tale*, written in the early second century AD, offers a good example of an intricate travel-quest: for the first half of the novel, the protagonists, Habrocomes and Anthia, are either together or following each other's tracks; yet as the narrative advances, a series of journeys moves the separated couple around the Mediterranean.<sup>23</sup>

Rhetorically structured descriptions of imaginative, idealized realms in the narratives of the ancient Greek romances are exacerbated, in comparison to the descriptions of actions that are featured in epic. These are descriptions of characters that are not half as heroic as Odysseus. "The most striking difference," Reardon observes, "is in level, in boldness of imagination. Chaereas is no Odysseus; the struggles of romance heroes, where they rise at all above passivity,

---

<sup>23</sup> Niklas Holzberg situates the violent, topsy-turvy Mediterranean world of the Greek novelistic romances in actual socio-historical events that aided its fictional development, noting, "not long the rise of the novel, a political upheaval took place in many [Greek-speaking cities in the Levant that were under Roman rule], one which probably had the most far-reaching consequences possible for the of community life existing until then. Alexander's conquests and the division of his Empire into the kingdoms of his successors robbed the Greek polis of the power it had wielded in the Classical period. The once autonomous city-states had to submit to the supremacy of monarchs, and their citizens, with the exception of the wealthy few who were allowed to hold high offices in the capital, were excluded from all responsible government positions. Because the new governing body was literally a distant power for most of its subjects, there was probably a certain degree of bewilderment on the part of the average individual. He could no longer be sure whether he could still expect the state to protect his particular political and economic interests. The wars that followed this upheaval and the increasing numbers of organized brigands and pirates must certainly have posed a considerable threat to the private fortunes of individual citizens. After power had passed from Alexander's successors to the Romans and after the fall of the Roman Republic, with the consequent end to wars and private terrorism, life became on the one hand more peaceful and the economic situation probably took a turn for the better in most cases. On the other hand, however, politics and government were now in the hands of men who, for Greek citizens, were truly alien. Individuals, therefore, had all the more reason to concentrate on their private lives and perhaps occasionally indulge in the kind of escapist literature, which in literature of the period around the turn of the fourth to the third century B.C. with the flowering of the New Comedy in Athens" (31-32).

are puny by comparison with those of the man who wrestled with Poseidon, Polyphemus, Circe; but this is a latter-day world, and latter-day epic—for Everyman” (129-30).

### *Ekphrasis as a Means of Exploring Utopian and Dystopian Territories*

In the chapters that follow I examine the novelistic romances in light of the literary and cultural influences that permeated the genre, particularly after the establishment of Christianity as a prominent religion in the Levant. I consider the Greek novelistic romances as products of the intellectual life of the early Roman Empire, and consequently as literature influenced by literary conventions and cultural mores that characterized and shaped other genres, contemporary to the ones that flourished during the Second Sophistic period.<sup>24</sup>

Vivid, rhetorically structured description remains the most prominent of all rhetorical characteristics that the Greek novelistic romance inherited from the Classical Greek heritage of the Second Sophistic period. The free composition of modern times would have been alien to Greek writers, who considered predetermined rhetorical patterns of composition (*Progymnasmata*) essential to the creation of popular narrative, and, as a result, a major part of the cultural

---

<sup>24</sup> The term Second Sophistic is also applied to the Greek rhetoric and oratory of the second, third, and fourth Christian centuries. Charles Sears Baldwin in *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic* introduces the literary characteristics of the period, one of which is ekphrasis: “the virtues of the ecphrasis,” Baldwin notes, “are clearness and visibility; for the style must through hearing operate to bring about seeing. But it is no less important that the expression correspond to the thing. If the thing be fresh, let the style be so too; if it be dry, let the style be similar” (36).

fabric of society from the Hellenistic period to the end of antiquity. The term “ἐκφρασις,” (ekphrasis) and generally the idea of description, occupied a prominent position in ancient rhetoric, which remained current in Byzantium throughout the use of late antique models. Although the Byzantine authors of ekphrases were far removed in time from these rhetorical works, “the principles remained valid and provide valuable indications of the nature of Byzantine ekphrasis” (James and Webb 4).

Scholars such as Graham Anderson, Reardon, and Shadi Bartsch have acknowledged the contextual and stylistic influence of the Second Sophistic period on the Greek novelistic romances and pointed out its effects on the emerging genre. Anderson, in *Ancient Greek Fiction*, claims that there is “doubt about the association of rhetoric and romance” (31). In spite of the widespread acknowledgement of the relation between rhetorical techniques of the Second Sophistic period and the Greek novelistic romances, ekphrasis is not always expressed in flattering terms when studied by contemporary scholars.<sup>25</sup>

Unlike those who readily dismiss the obvious presence of rhetoric in the Greek novelistic romances, however, I find the use of ekphrasis in them illuminating and its study essential to the understanding of the romances’ contents. Although the descriptive detours that appear in the Byzantine romances have been stigmatized as rhetorical and escapist, such descriptions are among the

---

<sup>25</sup> J. Helms, for example, in *Character Portrayal in the Romance of Chariton*, is particularly contemptuous: “One can see in the romance the hand of the sophist-rhetoricians at work. [ . . . ] The romances are full of their activity: fanciful descriptions, irrelevancies, emotional arguments, pathetic outpouring of grief, numerable thoughts of suicide, etc., and much of this clothed in longwinded, bombastic, and irrelevant speeches or monologues” (15).

earliest examples of invented fiction in modern European literature and provide useful insight into Byzantine erotic ideas and imagery, which are firmly excluded from most Byzantine literature. James Heffernan, who has studied Classical people's fascination with the literary trope of ekphrasis, notes that detailed descriptive passages, appearing in a work of any genre, invite readers to measure the effect of writing and narration against an older mode of representation—ekphrastic writing.<sup>26</sup>

The function of classical ekphrasis is described in great detail in the *Progymnasmata*, a series of composition exercises designed to train skills of argumentation and exposition in young boys who were about to start their study of rhetoric.<sup>27</sup> The influence of such exercises is manifested not only in their consistent appearance in the Greek novelistic romances, but also in the versions in which they have survived: “Four versions of these preliminary exercises survive, spanning the first five centuries of the Christian era; there must have been more but these texts can be taken as representative” (James and Webb 4). In the *Progymnasmata* (written by Aphthonius in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD) ekphrasis is thought to perform a similar function to visual art: it appears as a visual passage

---

<sup>26</sup> Heffernan's archetypal example, the lengthy description of the shield that Hephaestus made for Achilles in the 18<sup>th</sup> book of the *Iliad*, uncovers the wealth of cultural, social, political, and artistic information that we can derive from its study. “The shield microcosmically reflects the whole ‘thematic expanse’ of the *Iliad*,” Heffernan argues, “and some of its scenes actually do mirror the world of the poem. The shield seems to transcend war because it represents so many other kinds of human experience: marriage, litigation, plowing, sheep-herding, cattle-driving, grape-harvesting, festivals, dancing, singing, and acrobatics. Thus the shield has been read as the embodiment of our understanding of their employment in the text ‘idealized temporality’ and a respite from the pressures of reality” (10-11).

<sup>27</sup> Ruth Webb in “Poetry and Rhetoric” and Ronald F. Hock in “The Rhetoric of Romance” (both essays found in Stanley Porter's *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period 330 B.C. - A.D. 400*) offer a succinct analysis of *Progymnasmata*, the rhetorical exercises that characterized the Second Sophistic period, and analyze the effect of these exercises in context as they appear in the Ancient Greek novelistic romances.

which describes the subject so clearly that anyone hearing the words would seem to see it: “λογος περιγηματικος υπ’ οψιν αγων εναργως το δηλουμενον” (a descriptive speech [λογος] causing the thing to be shown before the eyes).

Ekphrasis, thus, is the most common link between the Vernacular Greek romances, which date from 1204 to 1453 and those of the Hellenistic period (1<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century AD). In this dissertation I argue that the study of detailed utopian ekphrases offers numerous possibilities to a contemporary understanding of the otherworlds (whether utopian, dystopian, real, or imaginary) that medieval Greek authors describe in their secular writings. The romances of Longus (*Daphnis and Chloe*) and Achilles Tatius (*Leucippe and Clitophon*), namely, offer extensive commentaries on pictures: the stories open with a narrator contemplating a picture and then forming an exegesis of it, which is the love story. Ekphrasis’ longevity, spanning from the pre-Christian to the contemporary period, serves as an indication of its dynamic nature and, as Heffernan notes, “reveals again and again this narrative response to pictorial stasis, the story-telling impulse that language by its very nature seems to release and stimulate” (4-5).

Descriptions of utopian and dystopian realms often occupy long passages, and the form of the new genre (prose-fiction, as opposed to epic, new comedy, and other previous celebrated forms) offers fertile ground for the cultivation of detailed descriptions.<sup>28</sup> A work of fiction, in other words, tells a story (or

---

<sup>28</sup> James Heffernan and Gerard Genette delve into the narrative and descriptive energy that drives ekphrasis, in an effort to distinguish which one of the two—narration or description—predominates and determines the effectiveness of the rhetorical mode. Genette, in *Narrative Discourse*, admits that the boundaries between narration and description “are very uncertain, since obviously pure description (purified of any narration) and pure narration (purified of any description) do not exist” (99). Heffernan, who supports Genette’s view, notes that “the instability of the boundaries between description and narration

describes a place in this case) that inevitably both stimulates and satisfies our imagination.

Ekphrasis has received much attention from ancient Greek writers, who used it as an aid to rhetorical exercises during the classical period, as well as modern literary critics, who have argued extensively about just what the word means or may be construed to mean. It remains a term quite diverse in its application (as it appears in a number of genres) and even elusive (shifting its effects depending on the purposes that it is made to serve in any one genre), not reducible to a single satisfactory definition.

Unlike the modern use of ekphrasis, which is restricted to a description of a work of art, classical ekphrasis was essentially a verbal technique for vividly representing a subject that could be used in various types of composition, and it was also closely linked to narrative, in both ancient and Byzantine rhetorical theory: it focused on descriptions of persons, places, times, events, and so forth. The vivid account of events that characterizes classical ekphrasis was seen as a powerful means of persuasion and communication widely used by both rhetoricians and sophists. As Peter Wagner eloquently describes in *Icons, Texts, Iconotexts*, “[ekphrasis] stages a paradoxical performance, promising to give voice to the allegedly silent image even while attempting to overcome the power of the image by transforming and inscribing it” (13).

This kind of performance that engages in a collaboration of different media of communication (narrative and visual) within the text continues to

---

makes it implausible to identify ekphrasis as anything like pure description or to define it simply as a brake on narrative progression” (55).

fascinate when studied, in a world far removed by time from ours. Such a study can reveal important literary and cultural sensibilities through a narrative analysis of those realms described in the texts that the audience of the first Greek prose fiction perceived as ideal, utopian, or dystopian.

The rhetorical trope of ekphrasis grew in sophistication and effectiveness as Greek romance evolved into a popular genre, reaching its apogee in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries with the Komnenian and Palaiologan Byzantine romances. Not only did ekphrasis occupy “central stage” in the Byzantine literary and artistic scenes, but it was also acknowledged as “the most powerful and pernicious influence of Hellenism on the mind of Byzantium: uneducated or little-educated Byzantine painters could incorporate rhetorical techniques and structures into their work without a knowledge of their names or their places in the academic curriculum (Maguire 4-5).<sup>29</sup> Thus, detailed ekphrases in the Greek novelistic romances and in the later Byzantine romances provide useful information about distant worlds and times that bear very few similarities with those which readers and writers experienced.

Unlike the use of rhetorical description by Sophists, which was characterized by stock devices, the ekphrases we encounter in the Greek novelistic romance are not static, but nicely integrated in the narrative flow. In the later reappearance of ekphrasis in the Byzantine romances, description and

---

<sup>29</sup> Henry Maguire, who has studied the effect of ekphrasis in Byzantine art, notes that in the mind of an educated Byzantine there was no clear divider between art and rhetoric, which points to an interesting merging of Christianity and pagan rhetoric: “Rhetoric helped [Byzantine] artists to add vividness to their art by filling out the bare narration of sacred texts with dramatic detail,” Maguire notes, adding that “some of the most moving and most striking images in Byzantine iconography were created under the influence of literary eloquence, and the balance and harmony that was sought by rhetoricians was also an important ingredient in the aesthetic of Byzantine art” (109-10).

imagery perpetuate social and historical changes, and Christian principles are expressed in lengthy ekphrases replete with allegorical language. The study of allegorical, descriptive detours within the narrative of the Greek romance, thus, allows for a better understanding of cultural attitudes and literary system of the period that gave rise to novelistic Greek fiction.

I am fascinated by the use of ekphrasis as an instrument of description and expression of cultural and literary mores in the early Greek romances and later in the Byzantine revival of the genre, particularly since it is highly unlikely that the medieval Greek and Byzantine authors used literary modes and devices such as that of ekphrasis simply to reproduce a “vener” of classical learning: “the selection and adaptation of such passages [referring to quotations and themes] was a matter of skill and judgment” (James and Webb 3). Descriptive narrative detours within the narrative were continuously refined in the Greek novelistic romances and by the time they were used in the Byzantine romances ekphrasis had become primarily an instrument through which emotion was communicated, establishing the mood of the work: “the importance of emotion as both a constituent element and effect of vivid description is evident in ekphrases of paintings from Late Antiquity on. By giving graphic accounts of dramatic events and by articulating the emotion aroused by the subject of the painting, the author aimed to move the listener” (James and Webb 9).

In the following chapters I study ekphrasis within the context of rhetoric, where it belongs. An examination of the tradition of ekphrasis enables me to

evaluate individual features of the Greek novelistic romances, as well as gauge the Byzantine contribution to the ekphrastic tradition. Such a project will also contribute to an understanding of the expectations of its original audience, helping to avoid such anachronisms as the idea of literary and pictorial “realism,” for which no Greek term exists.

In chapter one—“Res and Verbum: Linguistic and Aesthetic Means of Expressing the ‘Other’”—I explore the interpretive possibilities ekphrasis offers to a contemporary understanding of medieval Levantine otherworlds (whether utopian, dystopian, real, or imaginary) that are described in the early Greek and Byzantine romances. Ekphrasis is the most common link between the vernacular Byzantine romances and those of the 12<sup>th</sup> century; this common attribute allows for discussion and analysis of the otherworlds of the Greek novelistic romances, individually and in relation to landscapes described in the Komnenian and Palaiologan romances of the 12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>30</sup> This analysis will bring to the fore meaningful distinctions in the development of the medieval otherworlds found in the continuous and evolving tradition of medieval Greek and Byzantine romance.

In chapter two—“The Garden in the Byzantine Romances: From Locus Amoenus and Paradisus Terrestris to an Allegorical Garden”—I study the evolution of idealized pagan locations or enclosed gardens of love from their early

---

<sup>30</sup>The most frequently described items in the Hellenistic and Byzantine romances are the heroine, statues, bathhouses, the exterior of a castle, and even an interior with painted rooms. The scope of ekphrasis in the vernacular romances of *BC*, *KC*, and *TA*, is more restricted than in the earlier romances of *Ephes.*, *Daph.*, and *AR*, but in length and rhetorical elaboration the ekphrasis of the later works is frequently lengthy and spectacular.

appearance in detailed narrative passages in the Greek novelistic romances of antiquity, to their Christian appropriation in the Komnenian and Palaiologan romances of 1081-1185 and 1261-1453, respectively.<sup>32</sup> The authors of the 12<sup>th</sup> century romances represent in their descriptions of idealized locations a renewed search for individual salvation through secular, human love, and they often do so in allegorical terms. The way to salvation lies partly in the ancient literary texts and their rhetorical techniques which, for the Byzantines, both initiated and legitimized the quest.

In this chapter I also consider the allegorical shift in the projection of utopias and enclosed gardens, in an effort to reveal historical, cultural, and religious influences that necessitated such a change—from purely Christian to allegorical and even secular or romantic. Detailed descriptions of pagan locations and secularized human love in the Byzantine romances are infused with allegorical allusions and Christian doctrine, both of which legitimized the composition of such narratives in a society where Christian piety and Hellenistic Classicism complimented one another by means of appropriation.<sup>33</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> In *DC* the description of the *locus amoenus* from which the lovers in the opening scene have been snatched, moves quickly from a description of the landscape to a detailed account of a fountain with a column surmounted by an eagle, from whose mouth a stream of water flows, with statues by Pheidias and Praxiteles all around.

<sup>33</sup> In the Byzantine romances ekphrasis is not the only trope used to describe idealized locations and otherworlds; allegory works alongside ekphrasis. In the Komnenian and Palaiologan romances allegory functions as a matrix of generic appropriation, making possible the fusion of diverse literary, cultural, and generic elements. Early Byzantine writers seized the allegorical possibilities of a journey or quest, which was equated with earthly life, and saw an individual's love, which could transcend even death, as analogous to the soul's love for God. The "allegorization" of the ancient romances, although it distorts a fictional text by reading it as something else, is also proof of the power to generate an intellectual and emotional response to the questions confronted by its author and its earlier readers.

In chapter three—“Mirabile Dictu: Marvelous and Sublime Manifestations in the Novelistic and Byzantine Romances”—I study the narrative expressions of marvelous and sublime episodes in both genres—the Greek novelistic romances and their Byzantine successors. The study of the marvelous in this chapter is viewed in conjunction with the influences on romance of other genres, namely, epic, hagiography, and historiography, in which the marvelous and the sublime exist in continuous interplay. The novelistic romances of the Hellenistic period provide fertile ground for the exploration of the marvelous and the sublime (both manifested in the adventurous and often fantastical trips of the protagonists). The literary exploration of marvels is also intriguing as it offers fruitful comparative possibilities between the early Hellenistic novels and the later Byzantine romances.

Supernatural phenomena are more detailed and widespread in the Greek novelistic romances, as opposed to the reappearance of such elements in Byzantine romances. In *TS*, *CC*, *Daph.*, *LC*, and *AR*, marvels take place at the fringes of the real world, and not in another world. The hero in these novels moves around the fringes of the known world in which the ordinary laws of nature are temporarily suspended. For instance, Alexander’s letters addressed to his mother, Olympias, and his teacher, Aristotle, in Pseudo-Callisthenes’ version of the *Alexander Romance*, deal with the hero’s adventures in India, his drive toward the end of the world, and are filled with the most fantastic accounts. The hero reports on fabulous animals, men in animal guise, and even polymorphous creatures, whose human or animal natures remain ambivalent.

For the Byzantine writers, however, the most important marvels were the sublime workings of God, which directed the life-path of the protagonists in a universe governed by divine providence. In the heroic narrative of *DA*, for example, marvels take place in the desert, and in other remote territories of Byzantine Anatolia, which the hero guards against Arab attack. Such marvels often take the form of sexual and spiritual temptation, where the hero's behavior and actions are governed solely by heathen or Christian forces. Consequently, supernatural occurrences are perceived as agents of God or of the devil.

In chapter four—"Utopias or Dystopias? Considering the Sinister Twist"—I explore how Greek novelistic romances and their Byzantine successors project fantastic and dystopian otherworlds. My focus here is on dystopian descriptions and those events (natural or supernatural) and agents (human or divine) that make the existence of such fictional places possible.<sup>34</sup> In both genres (the early Greek and Byzantine romance) otherworldly terrains are populated by hyperbolic and grotesque figures. In the settings of these fictional works, the hero and heroine often try to understand oddity and rationalize natural perplexity through dialogue.

In the Komnenian and Palaiologan romances, ekphrastic descriptions of dystopian realms abound with Christian symbolism. Allegorical and folkloric creatures, supernatural phenomena with apocalyptic associations and the miraculous powers of holy relics or religious images attest to the influence of Christianity in the later vernacular Byzantine revival of the genre of romance.

---

<sup>34</sup> Among the medieval novelistic romances, *AR* provides ample proof of such natural monstrosities found in often obscure and ill-defined locations in the East.

The popularity of the marvelous and the miraculous is also indicative of an ever-increasing threat the “barbaric” East posed on Byzantium, which was divided between its geographic (eastern) and political (western) loyalties.<sup>35</sup> The descriptions of the eastern territories in medieval Greek romance inspired considerable fascination and fear in the audiences and readers they reached, and the popularity of the genre attests to such an impact.<sup>36</sup> Overall, the study of medieval Greek otherworlds (utopian and dystopian alike) can reveal relations among cultural, historical, political, and literary forces that forged images of eastern otherworlds and influenced the perception (and perhaps misconceptions) of the East in the minds of medieval Greeks.

---

<sup>35</sup> The Greek novelistic romances and their Byzantine counterparts bear close ties with the genres of historiography and hagiography, both of which influenced the representation of utopian and dystopian visions in medieval secular literature. Visions, revelations, supernatural and demonic appearances were staple ingredients of hagiographic and exemplum literature, which had a profound effect on the secular novels and romances discussed in this chapter. Visionary experiences, similar to those found in hagiographic accounts are featured in the Greek medieval romances, in which the hero’s life path is remarkably similar to that of a Christian martyr. Byzantine heroines, similarly, often undergo near-death experiences, have prophetic reams and hallucinations, some of which help them regain inner strength and continue their pursuit of their lost beloved.

<sup>36</sup> Pirates, bandits, and bizarre humanoids like the dreaded Boukoloι [Βουκολοι] who inhabited the Nile Delta, are staple characters of the Greek novelistic romances. These creatures bring about disaster and disarray—they raid, rape, destroy, and spread panic—in an otherwise peaceful realm. They often function as reminders of human nature’s fickleness, vice, and temptation.

## CHAPTER I

*Res and Verbum: Ekphrastic Means of Expressing the Other*

The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,  
 Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven;  
 And as imagination bodies forth  
 The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen  
 Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing  
 A local habitation and a name.

Theseus, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (V. i. 12-17)

So then, if Zeus will not place our story among the stars, if Poseidon will not imprint it upon the waters, if Earth will not nurture it in plants and flowers, then, as though in unfading timbers and in adamantine precious stones, with Hermes' pen and ink and in language breathing the fire of rhetoric let our story be inscribed, and let some one of those who come after turn it into rhetoric and forge a golden statue hammered out of words as our imperishable monument.<sup>1</sup>

Eustathios Makrembolites, *Hysmine and Hysminias*, (IA, 20-22)

---

<sup>1</sup> These concluding remarks uttered by the narrator of Eustathios Makrembolites' romance *Hysmine and Hysminias* capture the significance of rhetoric in Greco-Byzantine prose-fiction: "Τοιῦν εἰ Ζεὺς οὐ καταστερίσει τὰ καθ' ἡμᾶς, εἰ Ποσειδῶν οὐ καταστηλογραφήσει τοὺς ὕδασι, εἰ Γῆ μὴ καταφυτουργήσει τοὺς φυτοὺς καὶ τοὺς ἀνθεσίν, ἀλλ' ὡς ἐν ἀμαραντοῖς ξύλοις καὶ λιθοῖς ἀδαμασίν Ἑρμοῦ γραφίδι καὶ μελανί καὶ γλάσση πῦρ πνεύουσα ρητορικὸν τὰ καθ' ἡμᾶς στηλογραφήσεται, καὶ τις τῶν οὐσιγόνων καταρρητορεύσει ταῦτα καὶ ὡς ἀθάνατω στηλῇ τοὺς λόγους ἀνδριαντὰ χαλκούργησει καταχρυσόν" (Beaton vii).

In this chapter I examine the interaction between narrative, imagery, and the visual implications that result from narrative's rhetorical manipulation in ekphrases of Levantine otherworlds. Rhetorical descriptions of imaginative terrains are prominent in both, the Greek novelistic romances of the early Hellenistic period and in their Byzantine successors, the verse romances of the Komnenian and Palaiologan periods.<sup>2</sup> After surviving a literary hiatus of eight centuries, beginning with the decline of the Greek novelistic romance in AD 400, ekphrases of eastern Mediterranean otherworlds become prominent again in the revival of the genre, in the Byzantine romances of the Komnenian and Palaiologan periods. In the later reappearance of the rhetorical trope, however, descriptions of Levantine terrains (fictional and historical alike) are appropriated through Frankish, Christian and eastern influences, becoming particularly meaningful when examined in light of significant historical and social changes that inspired their evolution.

Literary and artistic conceptions of idealized otherworlds and paradisiacal lands have dominated the western imagination throughout the ages. From Hesiod's Golden Age and Plato's Atlantis to medieval quests to locate a terrestrial paradise, the western imagination found continuous expression in literary and

---

<sup>2</sup> Ekphrasis, as a rhetorical device, appears in almost all surviving medieval Greek novelistic romances and follows in its development and sophistication the evolution of medieval Greek prose-fiction. The ekphrastic descriptions that appear in the narrative of the Greek novelistic romances served a very specific purpose, often didactic, and were used often by prose writers and rhetoricians alike. Arthur Fairbanks, in his introduction of Philostratus' *Imagines*, the most prominent diatribe on the function of rhetoric and ekphrasis in particular in prose fiction written about A.D. 300, claims that "they [ekphrases] were written as lectures or rhetorical exercises to display the power of the sophist. In so far as he was a teacher, they were models to be followed by his pupils; at the same time, because they dealt with works of art, they served to stimulate the imagination and to train aesthetic taste according to the standards then in vogue" (xxii).

artistic depictions of such “worlds.”<sup>3</sup> Despite the apparent unattainability of a place of freedom from all things unpleasant in this life, the hope of even temporarily enjoying it never lost its luster in the Middle Ages.<sup>4</sup> The fascination with otherworldly quests is also manifested in a number of manuscript illustrations from the early 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> century (on papyrus, parchment, and paper) and in the adventure-laden narrative of the Greek novelistic romances. Such illustrations occasionally stand in agreement with the text’s descriptive narrative and often complement it, by enhancing particular details.<sup>5</sup>

Greek romance otherworlds are places where the utopian longings of their audiences are often invested with unrealistic sensory desires. Because it is not our modern world, an otherworld is not bound by the scientific limits of the limits of our modern “ignorance,” offering, in turn, useful insight into those realms medieval people created in their fictional writing. In their rhetorical digressions,

---

<sup>3</sup> “Barely revealed to the gaze of the saints, paradise obstinately evades the quests of heroes. In pseudo-Callisthenes’ *Historia Alexandri magni* (the *Alexander Romance*), written between 200-100 BCE and 200-300 CE, the conqueror makes several painful attempts to find it. Reaching a region of shadows while trying to find the country of the Blessed, Alexander unwittingly comes upon the fountain of Immortality.” Danielle Lecoq and Roland Schaer, “Ancient, Biblical, and Medieval Traditions,” in *Utopia: The Search for the Ideal Society in the Western World*. (55).

<sup>4</sup> When Columbus discovered America, he thought he must be near the Garden of Eden, and Marco Polo, journeying to China, felt he might find it somewhere. The author of *The Book of John Mandeville* in his descriptions of Paradise claims that he never actually was there, and must rely on hearsay; but it is clear that he believed in the theoretical possibility of traveling far enough where he would look for it, even though he was aware that humans were too corrupt to ever find it.

<sup>5</sup> The most famous secular poem of the Middle Ages, *Roman de la Rose* written by Guillaume De Lorris (1237) and Jean De Meung (1280), is constructed around the themes of the dream and the quest, and takes place in an allegorical universe, at the center of which is an orchard or a garden of love. Terrestrial and celestial illustrations and descriptions of paradise—often taking the form of the Garden of Eden or New Jerusalem—are also found in religious manuscripts: “The ideal vision of the shady garden with living waters is sometimes replaced by a city, a citadel of the Old Testament but also connected with urban resurgence—as if, after the twelfth century and sign of protection and civility.” Danielle Lecoq and Roland Schaer, “Ancient, Biblical, and Medieval Traditions.” In *Utopia: The Search for the Ideal Society in the Western World* (38).

the Greek writers often express contradictory feelings of fascination, fear, and intrigue for the barbaric “other” in descriptions of real and imaginary territories of the East.<sup>6</sup> Such fictional otherworlds offered a temporary escape from daily fears and torments into the realm of fiction; they also nurtured the readers’ need to sustain hope of a terrestrial paradise.<sup>7</sup>

The widespread popularity of the new genre, also known as *Erotici Graeci*, permeated not only time, but topographic and literary boundaries as well, inspiring later masterpieces of Western literature. Heliodorus’ *Aithiopeka*, for example, influenced Sir Philip Sidney’s *Arcadia* (c. 1590), and the anonymous *Apollonius, King of Tyre* is considered as the ultimate source of Shakespeare’s *Pericles* (c. 1609).

Five of the nine Greek novelistic romances of the Hellenistic period that have survived in whole, *ET*, *CC*, *Daph.*, *LC*, and *Aith.*, share remarkably similar plots, along with a propensity toward descriptive digressions.<sup>8</sup> In these romances the hero and heroine are of superlative beauty, both (essentially) chaste, and fall

---

<sup>6</sup> The Greek novelistic romances of the first three centuries AD were the literary products of vibrant Greek communities that flourished in Alexandria of Egypt. Later attempts to produce secular literature in the form of romance can be traced in Byzantium and in locations around the Mediterranean basin, in modern Greece and Turkey. The Hellenistic period, the literature of which has been studied by Tomas Haag in *The Novel in Antiquity* (1983), begins with Alexander’s conquest of Asia (beginning in the 320s B.C.). By this time, the center of Greek literary and cultural life had moved from Athens to Alexandria. “The prose genres of this period [include] historiography, now slowly bent on stirring the emotions and creating sensational effects; biography; fantastic travel tales and utopias” (xi). As far as the origins of the genre, some scholars have derived it from the Alexandrian love elegy, others from Alexandrian historiography, and others from religious myth. All, however, agree that the novel absorbed features of ekphrasis. Longus, in the prologue of [*Daph.*], for instance, claims to be writing the verbal equivalent to a picture.

<sup>7</sup> More specifically, the authors of the Greek novelistic romances “relied on fictional means to depict ideal societies and they did so, in part, to foil the censors; furthermore, by deliberately positioning themselves in imaginary realms where all things are permitted, they could make full use of their descriptive talents to endow their made-up societies with all the attributes of a material, manifest, and not just theoretical reality—qualities that befit a politics of literature” (Schaer 3).

wildly in love at first sight. They are consequently kept apart by a barrage of disasters—kidnappings, pirates, shipwrecks, slavery, tyrants, attempted suicides, and human sacrifices, to name a few—yet overcome all difficulties and are finally united in marriage at the novel’s close.

In the narrative of these romances, ekphrases of works of art, otherworldly realms, and unusual humanoids interrupt the narrative flow (often for several hundred lines) and evolve into a literary topos.<sup>8</sup> The “disruptive effect” of these descriptions has generated poignant criticism by readers and scholars who feel increasingly alienated from a genre that appears to occasionally lack narrative and structural coherence.<sup>9</sup> Contemporary readers have viewed the ekphrases of the Greek novelistic romances as unnecessary parenthetical interruptions that complicate further the already intricate story line of the romances and classical scholars have dismissed them as excessive and artless, since they appear quite irrelevant to the “real” business of the story and do nothing more than “alienate the modern reader to whom these novel seem strange and oddly inept precisely in their embrace of the irrelevant” (Bartsch 4). Such critical remarks are also very

---

<sup>8</sup> The most thorough treatment of the rhetorical mode of ekphrasis in works of Greek prose-fiction is recorded by the sophist Philostratus the Elder, also known as the father of criticism, in his work *Imagines* about AD 300, and by Callistratus’ *Descriptions*. For Philostratus, description was not a side issue in the narrative, but instead the main purpose. His views influenced many later Greek and Latin writers who deployed the literary device of ekphrasis to pass from the actual description of a work of art to elements of the story which presumably could not be or were not included in the painting, or statue they were describing.

<sup>9</sup> The bad press that the Greek novelistic romance has received by contemporary critics and readers alike can be found in P. Parsons, “Ancient Greek Romances,” *New York Review of Books*, 20 August - 2 September 1981. The genre has been regarded as pulp fiction of antiquity, which somehow failed to establish itself as serious literature fit for serious study.

much in agreement with the early dismissal of the genre when the first Greek novelistic romances started to circulate in Alexandria.<sup>10</sup>

The first romances of Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius, *Aithiopia* and *Leucippe and Clitophon* respectively, appeared first on a low and certainly disrespectable level of literature, adapted to the taste and understanding of “frivolous-minded people.”<sup>11</sup> Evidently, the new genre “did not rate the respectful attention, much less the authorship, of such intellectual spirits as Lucian and the outstanding prose writers of his day, although it had flourished on the obscure lower levels of ancient literature for two hundred years previously” (Perry 8). The newborn Greek novelistic romance undoubtedly had very little in common (especially in form and literary conventions) with previously acclaimed and prominent genres like the Epic and New Comedy, yet it offered a fresh outlook and understanding of the individualistic, post-Hellenistic world that appealed to the aesthetics and literary demands of a wide Levantine readership.<sup>12</sup>

The plot of Xenophon’s *Ephesian Tale* is representative of the

---

<sup>10</sup> One reason for the “popular,” and therefore low, status of the Greek novelistic romances in antiquity is that it offended “against the decorum of genre: [they are all] written in prose, which was traditionally the medium for serious, particularly historical, writing” (Radford 23).

<sup>11</sup> “Catering as they did for a lower-middle-class public, they [Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius] were content to be mere entertainers, manipulating stock characters according to a popular formula, and relying for their effects on surprising plots and romantic sentimentality” (Turner 8). *Imagines*, our most extensive account of what a Roman picture gallery (and the Roman viewing of pictures) may have been one of the greatest ruins of antiquity. Philostratus, the author, claims to have based his account in actuality, arguing that his verbal descriptions are rendered after original *πανοκες* (paintings) housed in a single collection in Naples.

<sup>12</sup> In terms of its form, the new genre was by nature most unbounded, as it was not confined in the range of what it could include, and as all inclusive, its form came to correspond with the spirit of the Roman imperial times, “tending to absorb and to supplant in popular favor all other forms, especially poetry and drama and whatever in artistic literature is intense or concentrated, and to become for the open society of the cosmopolitan world what the old epic was for the closed society of tribal and patriarchal days—everything” (Perry 29).

adventurous plot elements that appealed to the readership of the new genre: in astonishingly few pages we find strange journeys, shipwrecks, pirates and brigands, premature burials, incessant and fruitless assaults on the virtue of both hero and heroine, and a final reunion against what seems to be overwhelming odds. Anthia, the heroine in Xenophon's tale, is captured by pirates at sea, shipwrecked and then taken hostage by brigands on land, nearly raped, nearly sacrificed to Ares by being hung up as a target for spear-throwing, buried alive after drugging herself to avoid a forced marriage, and thrown into a pit with two fierce dogs. Yet, she survives still chaste and faithful to her husband, Habrocomes.

He, in the meantime, has been threatened by the passion of a homosexual pirate, then by that of the pirate-chief's daughter, shipwrecked on the coast of Egypt, captured by shepherds, sold as a slave, falsely accused of murdering his master, crucified on a rock beside the Nile, blown by a gale into the river, fished out again and condemned to be burnt at the stake—the Nile overflows, luckily, and puts out the flames. The hero's subsequent adventures include staying at the house of a Spartan fisherman, who shares a bedroom with his wife's mummified corpse.

This evolution of literary "fashion" was the result (among other social and cultural influences) of a different set of aesthetic ideals that the writers of the Greek novelistic romances were addressing in their narratives:<sup>13</sup> the Greek authors

---

<sup>13</sup> What many contemporary readers find most objectionable and disruptive in the Greek novelistic romances, is their stark implausibilities. There appears to be "no logic nexus between event and event or between event and character. But in a world where the links of causality are broken and Fortune has taken

offer a social and personal view of the world and the individual in it—a private individual often isolated and insecure in a world too big for him, who finds his security and identity in the love and adventure narrated in the early romances.<sup>14</sup>

Narrative discursions in *ET*, *CC*, *Daph.*, and *Aith.* include descriptions of paintings, artworks, theatrical spectacles, dreams, oracles, strange animals and exotic plants, gardens and rivers, as well as digressions of a more abstract nature, on religion and natural history. The most intriguing of all ekphrastic passages, however, are those describing classical and eastern-Mediterranean otherworlds. Such ekphrases appear early into the novel and take the form of a description of a painting (often of a classical theme) with which the hero or heroine was expected to identify.<sup>15</sup> They are also found at the end of a propitious journey, or “happen” as the result of a chance encounter, or in a happy contingency of a shipwreck that turned out well; they symbolically prefigure much of the action, as do the subjects of other paintings introduced later in the narrative. *Daph.*, *DC*, *LC*, and *Aith.*, all begin with detailed descriptions of such paintings that bear allegorical and

---

control of the affairs of men, it is the very incalculability of the events that absorbs interest. Logic is supplanted by paradox and emotion becomes sentimentality, to be savored for its own sake” (Hadas ix).

<sup>14</sup> Bryan Reardon, explores the socio-historical background that affected the conception and development of the new genre in his second chapter of *The Form of Greek Romance* (1991), and notes that “while local life was assuredly busy, in the wider complex of the cosmopolitan Greek world this was no longer the compact culture of Old Comedy, in which a man could aspire to having an effective voice in controlling his own social existence in his own autonomous community; now there was a large-scale, open society, in which the individual cut a much smaller figure, was swallowed up and lost in the mass [. . .] as we may feel lost in today’s large scale open society. Chariton’s story was written for those who lived in that world, and it reflects that world and its inhabitants, their situation, their anxieties, their aspirations” (28).

<sup>15</sup> The use of descriptive narration in a literary work as an introductory device was familiar enough from the works of the Greek Sophists (contemporary to the Greek writers of the Greek novelistic romance). “Paintings that may or may not have been invented for the occasion were both used [. . .] as vehicles of allegory, for in the rhetorical literature of the second century A.D. the evocation of a fictitious allegorical scene was still a routine device” (Bartsch 41).

interpretive significance, involving the fate of the protagonists and the course of their adventurous perils.

Longus, in the proem of *Daph.*, tells how, when hunting on Lesbos, came across a beautiful grove sacred to the Nymphs which had in it a painting adorned with a story of love.

The grove itself was beautiful—thickly wooded, flowery, well watered; a single spring nourished everything, flowers and trees alike. But the picture was lovelier still, combining great artistic skill with an exciting, romantic subject. Many people were attracted by its fame and came, even from abroad, to pray to the Nymph and to look at the picture. The picture: women giving birth, others dressing the babies, babies exposed, animals suckling them, shepherds adopting them, young people pledging love, a pirate's raid, an enemy attack—and more, much more, all of it romantic. (288-89).

Charmed by the aesthetics of the grove's graphic beauty and the appeal of its erotic story (the most beautiful sight he had ever seen), the narrator is seized with desire (*ποθος*) to rival it in a narrative: "I gazed in admiration and was seized by a yearning to depict the picture in words" (289). He found an interpreter for the painting and produced the four books that follow as an offering to Love, the Nymphs, and Pan. The narrative that follows is obviously prompted by this picture, and additionally becomes the literary equivalent of the picture, an ekphrasis itself.

The effect that Longus impresses upon ancient and contemporary readers alike with his introductory set-piece description, digresses from the closely drawn

exercises and rhetorical effects of the *Progymnasmata* of the Second Sophistic.<sup>16</sup> In the introductory description of the pastoral painting, the narrator artfully adds emotional impact to the rhetorical device of ekphrasis by presenting his description autobiographically—he claims to have found the picture and been inspired by it to tell the story: “When I was hunting in Lesbos, I saw the most beautiful sight I have ever seen [. . .] I gazed in admiration and was seized by a yearning to depict the picture in words” (288-89). The ekphrasis here has something important to teach us “about the role of art and artifice within the larger cultural system, during an era in which it was said by some that while visual art imitates nature, nature also imitates art. This reversal of terms is a highly sophistic conceit, but it demonstrates the extent to which the power of pictorial images was felt to enrapture both the eye and the heart” (Zeitlin 148).

With the exception of Xenophon’s *Ephesian Tale*, the ancient Greek romances are intentional literary experiments in which the status of the text itself, both as work of art in relation to older masterpieces and as a fictional narrative

---

<sup>16</sup> Moses Hadas, in his introduction of *Three Greek Romances: Longus, Xenophon, Dio Chrysostom*, comments extensively on the importance of the rhetorical mode of ekphrasis in the early Greek romance: “so important is the rhetorical element in [the Greek novelistic romances] that earlier students of the genre were convinced that it originated with the second-century-AD teachers of the so-called Second Sophistic. To afford their students material for verbal and casuistical acrobatics the rhetors proposed for discussion legal cases which are in effect skeleton plots for romances. A vestal convicted of violating her vow of virginity and flung down a precipice escapes without injury: should she be subjected to the ordeal a second time? Perhaps the gods wished to prolong her agony? Perhaps she had practiced falling down precipices in preparation? A man is captured by pirates but freed by the chief’s daughter, whom he promises to marry; when he arrives home with his bride his father disinherits him. A loving couple vow not to survive each other; the husband sends the wife a false report of his death; the wife flings herself down a precipice but recovers; the father demands that she divorce him. Cases such as these (drawn from the elder Seneca’s handbook on the subject) ultimately found their way into the *Gesta Romanorum* and thence into Boccaccio, from whom they were quarried by a thousand writers” (viii).

creating a certain illusion of reality is frequently brought to the fore.<sup>17</sup> This illusion is based on an intriguing tripartite relation between the painting elegantly viewed by the author or narrator, its narrative depiction, and the power of the natural surroundings that inspires creative awe. The overall effect that results from this relation can not possibly be contained in the effects the rhetoric of the Second Sophistic claimed to have devised to express by relating rhetoric to mimesis.

In Longus' ekphrases, the pairing of art and nature, as well as art and Eros, are intersected by yet another relation—that between the plastic arts and literature, between the eye and the voice, the image and the word. Froma Zeiltin, while examining the effects of nature, art, and imitation in *Daph.*, is concerned with the status and role of imitation not only in Longus's romance, but in all Greek novelistic romances.

---

<sup>17</sup> It is worth noting that the high esteem in which contemporary readership holds originality and prose fiction today, was alien to ancient Greek writers. "‘Once upon a time’ is not the way Classical Greek writers opened a work of literature. When Solon retired from politics he went to see Thespis act a play, and was scandalized. ‘Are you not ashamed,’ he said to the playwright, ‘to tell so many lies before so many people?’ Thespis replied that lies were legitimate in a work of the imagination, but Solon would not be convinced. Tragedians continued to write plays, but their personages and themes were derived from a body of myth which was regarded as ancient as history; what they did, in effect, was to make the ancient histories intelligible and meaningful. Only the comic poets could freely invent personas and events, and the closest affinity of prose fiction, which is the latest literary invention of the Greeks, is in New Comedy. From comedy, [the Greek novelistic romance], derived its love story, intrigue, recognition, and its bourgeois atmosphere, but the influence of other antecedent forms is equally apparent. The structure of the narrative, particularly in the longer novels, manifestly follows the pattern of the *Odyssey*. The idyllic atmosphere, most notable in *Daphnis and Chloe*, is a borrowing from pastoral poetry like Theocritus. Characterization of bourgeois types through dialogue was a contribution of writers of mimes, who were significantly called “biologists,” or students of life. Recurrent utopian elements were suggested by fanciful travel books, the aim of which was to point to improved political or social institutions. Rhetorical elements and ingeniously contrived situations came from the curricula of the schools. These include not only set apostrophes to or tirades against Fate, reflections on the paradoxes of Fortune and the likes, but also formal descriptions of works of art, exotic animals, royal courts, or picaresque landscapes” (Hadas vii-viii).

The viewer's desire is therefore also a desire for mimesis, and this factor raises yet another set of questions, also current in Longus's day, with regard to the uses imitation—both as to its status with respect to the 'real' and as to its validity as an enterprise that emulates earlier models. What best bridges that two worlds of 'nature' and 'art' is the double status of imitation—as a natural means of learning, and also as a high display of the sophistic aesthetic. (149).

In the epoch of the Second Sophistic, literature and painting viewed each other in the presentation of the same themes; consequently, the failure of the authors of the Greek novelistic romances to confine themselves closely to what was depicted in a painting or in a legend, may be regarded as the writers' inheritance from the descriptions of works of art in earlier Greek literature—both epic and drama. Homer, in the eighteenth Book of the *Iliad*, namely, describes the shield of Achilles in a elaborate ekphrasis, and Euripides describes statues which were used to adorn the sterns of ships in *Iphigenia in Aulis* (lines 230 ff.), and puts in the mouth of Ion an account of the treasures in the temple of Apollo (*Ion*, 192 f., 1133 f.).<sup>18</sup> Evidently, ekphrastic descriptions in the heyday of the Greek novelistic romances had become a definite type of literary ornament, and the

---

<sup>18</sup> The literary and cultural value of such detailed descriptions within the narrative is undisputed. One does not have to look very far: Homer's description of Achilles' shield in Book VIII of the *Iliad* has never been perceived as a descriptive nuisance or a neutral description in an adventure-packed narrative. It reveals the realms of human life, depicted on the round shield in stages that by their structure and sequence tell an interesting story. "The shield represents much more of Homer's world than the *Iliad* does. The entire universe is depicted on the shield [. . .] Achilles' shield shows us the whole world that is 'other' to the epic action of the *Iliad*, the world of everyday life outside history that Achilles will never know. The relation of epic to ekphrasis is thus turned inside out: the entire action of the *Iliad* becomes a fragment in the totalizing vision provided by Achilles' shield" (Mitchell 180).

poets or writers who employed the rhetorical mode felt no need to limit themselves very closely to some actual object which they seen or heard about.

Achilles Tattius, much like Longus and Xenophon of Ephesus, begins his narrative of *Leucippe and Clitophon* with a description of a painting which bears a widely known and readily-recognized classical tale—that of the abduction of Europa.<sup>19</sup> The narrator, after escaping from a storm, offers sacrifice to goddess Astarte for his deliverance from the disaster and sets off to explore the unfamiliar terrain. In the course of his exploration, he comes across a picture of Zeus abducting Europa, which receives a most vivid ekphrasis of inanimate objects and mythical figures:

At the far end of the meadow, where the land jutted out into the sea, the artist had placed the maidens. Their pose expressed both joy and fear. Their heads were bound with garlands; their hair flowed freely down over their shoulders; their legs were quite bare—no skirts hampered their calves, no sandals their feet, for their cinctures drew the skirts up to the knee. Their faces were blanched, a wry twist at the corners of their mouths, eyes wide and staring out to sea. Their mouths were slightly open, as if a moment later they would actually scream in fear; they reached out their arms towards the bull. They stood on the margin of the sea where

---

<sup>19</sup> Ovid narrates the myth of Zeus' abduction of Europa in the second Book of *Metamorphoses* (lines 836 ff). According to the myth, Zeus, falling in love with Europa, sent Hermes to drive Agenor's cattle down to the seashore at Tyre, where she and her companions used to walk. "He himself joined the herd, disguised as a snow-white bull with great dewlaps and small, gem-like horns between which ran a single black streak. Europa, struck by his beauty, mastered her fear and began to play with him, putting flowers in his mouth and hanging garlands on his horns; in the end, she climbed upon his shoulders, and let him amble down with her to the edge of the sea. Suddenly, he swam away, while she looked back in terror at the receding shore; one of her hands clung to his right horn, the other still held a flower basket. Wading ashore near Cretan Gortyna, Zeus became an eagle and ravished Europa in a willow-ticket beside a spring; or, some say, under an evergreen plane tree. She bore him three sons: Minos, Rhadamanthys, and Sarpedon" (Graves 194-95).

the line of the waves rose just ever so slightly above the line of their soles: one could almost see they wanted to run after the bull but were afraid of entering the water. (176).

At this point, the ekphrases is interrupted by the ostensible narrator, Achilles Tatius himself, who intervenes and tells of his own reaction to the painting:

And Eros was leading the bull: Eros, a tiny child, with wings spread, quiver dangling, torch in hand. He had turned to look at Zeus with a sly smile, as if in mockery that he had, for Love's sake become a bull.

Though the entire painting was worth of admiration, I devoted my special attention to this figure of Eros leading the bull, for I have long been fascinated by passion, and I exclaimed, to think that a child can have such power over heaven and earth and sea. (176-77).

Clitophon, in turn, (the hero, who is also the interpreter of the ekphrasis) interrupts Achilles Tatius's narrative and offers his own exegesis, in a dramatic interjection that functions as a transition between the ekphrasis of the painting and the events of the romance: "And what have you suffered my friend?" the former narrator asks Clitophon, "You have the look, I know it well, of one who has progressed far in his initiation into Love's mysteries." Longus continues, "Well Sir, by Eros himself, please don't hesitate. The more storied the better. I clasped his right hand and we walked to a grove nearby where many plane trees grew in dense array and a stream meandered, cold and clear as if from fresh-melted snow. When we had found a low bench to sit on, I said, 'see, here we have the perfect

spot for your story—as delightful place and a setting most appropriate for tales of love” (177).

Another exegesis of a painting which foreshadows future narrative action involving the hero and heroine appears at the beginning of Book five of *LC*. Chaereas, a character who had been portrayed as a friend of the protagonists, Leucippe and Clitophon, in the first four books, falls deeply in love with Leucippe, and when he learns that she will not consider giving up Clitophon, rounds up some seamen who agree to help him kidnap her. The antihero, Chaereas, in turn, invites Clitophon to go to his home on the island of Pharos, but two unlucky omens stop them: a hawk pursuing a swallow collides with Leucippe striking her head with its wing. Following the prodigious sign, the protagonists immediately see a picture of Tereus and the rape of Philomena, confirming the ominous bird.

A maid was holding the unfolded robe; Philomela stood beside her and pointed to the pictures she had woven; Prokne nodded that she understood; her eyes glowed fiercely and angrily at the picture. King Tereus of Thrace was embroidered there, wrestling Philomela to his lust; her hair had been torn, her waistband broken, her dress ripped open one breast exposed; she planted her right hand against his eyes and with her left tried to hold the torn shreds of her garment across her breasts. Tereus held Philomela tightly in his arms, drawing her body as close as he could to his own and tightening his embrace on her flesh—so deftly the artist designed this figured weft. (234).

Upon deciding to stay behind and avoid visiting Chaereas's house, Leucippe asks Clitophon what the painting is about, and he gives her a fulsome description, laying emphasis on two features of the painting in particular, the women's fear of discovery and their desire for revenge: "Women in love who hurt a man in turn for his affront, even if they must endure as much harm as they impose, weigh the pain of their suffering against the pleasure of taking action. It was a feast of Furies set for Theseus. And then, laughing with terror, they brought in the basket with the child's remains" (235). The context in which this painting is described leaves no doubt that it directly foreshadows a disaster to come, and in fact the sinister predicament follows immediately upon the description: the protagonists, in the company of Chaereas, go to Paros where they see the famous lighthouse. The same evening, when Chaereas goes outside for a moment, men break into the house, wound Clitophon, and seize Leucippe. The hero and some local forces, in the meantime, commandeer a boat and go after them. As it looks like Clitophon's ship is getting closer, however, the pirates appear to bring Leucippe on deck, cut off her head, and toss her body into the sea, while Clitophon looks on in horror.

Both romances, *Daphnis and Chloe* and *Leucippe and Clitophon*, set a correlation between the description of paintings and the effects an interpretation or misinterpretation of the artistic work will have on the events that will soon unravel in the novel, denoting a connection between the painting and the story introduced in lieu of its interpretation will soon become evident. "As a corollary," Bartsch claims, "[the readers] are lured by their own expectations into

producing vague conjectures about the relationship of painting to narrative and about what the former's deep meaning and proleptic activity might be" (44).

Although these narrative detours appear as "asyndetic units," they provide a thematic connection with the novel's plot, and many of the descriptions that appear in the narrative of these ekphrases are directly attached to the action. For instance, the introductory ekphrasis of the rape of Europa may be looked upon as symbol of the plot: love is the main theme of the novel, as it is of the painting, and Europa is, like Leucippe, carried away over the sea. Detailed descriptions such as this, can also provide useful insight into the characters' psychological state; in the detailed description, the readers may seek symbols and forebodings, especially in Achilles Tatius, where a net of foreshadowing is spread all over the narrative.

Heliodorus, in *Aithiopeka*, much like Longus and Achilles Tatius before him, introduces his protagonists in an animated ekphrastic passage. The romance opens upon a scene of paradox a band of robbers faces at the Heracleotic mouth of the Nile: a scene of mass slaughter that apparently happened amid a banquet—a richly loaded ship is tied up nearby, yet there is no sight of any hostile forces, nor has anything been plundered. This scene is followed by yet another amazing sight: a divinely beautiful young woman with a bow is nursing a badly wounded, yet divinely handsome, young man. These, we later learn, are the central couple, Theagenes and Charicleia.

On a rock sat a girl, a creature of such indescribable beauty that one might have taken her for a goddess. Despite her great distress at her plight, she had an air of courage and nobility. On her head she wore a crown of laurel; from her shoulders hung a quiver; her

left arm leant on the bow, the hand hanging relaxed at the wrist. She rested the elbow of her other arm on her right thigh, cradling her cheek in her fingers. Her head was bowed, and she gazed steadily at a young man lying at her feet. (354).

Charicleia's stance is described in some detail and her stillness is indeed a characteristic of the spatial arts. Given the fact that Heliodorus's tale begins *in media res* (events that affect the plot of the story do not start to unravel until Book four), the author employs the "introductory painting" convention where he explains the story of Charicleia's marvelous conception and exposure:

But you, the child I bore, had a skin of gleaming white, something quite foreign to Ethiopians. I knew the reason: during your father's intimacy with me the painting had presented me with the image of Andromeda, who was depicted stark naked, for Perseus was in the very act of releasing her from the rocks, and had unfortunately shaped the embryo to her exact likeness. I was convinced that your color would lead to my being accused of adultery, for what had happened was so fantastic that no one would believe my explanation. (433).<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>20</sup> The Greek myth of Perseus's rescue of Andromeda from the horrid Medusa is particularly dramatic, primarily due to the passion, drama, and action that it projects, and has served throughout the ages many narrative and artistic depictions. Robert Graves gives a detailed account of the legend in the first volume of *Greek Myths*. As Perseus "rounded the coast of Philistia to the north, he caught sight of a naked woman chained to a sea-cliff, and instantly fell in love with her. This was Andromeda, daughter of Cepheus, the Ethiopian King of Joppa, and Cassiopeia. Cassiopeia had boasted that both she and her daughter were more beautiful than the Nereids, who accompanied of this insult to their protector Poseidon. Poseidon sent a flood and a female sea-monster to devastate Philistia; and when Cepheus consulted the Oracle of Ammon, he was told that his only hope of deliverance lay in sacrificing Andromeda to the monster. His subjects had therefore obliged him to chain her to a rock, naked except for certain jewels, and leave her to be devoured. As Perseus flew towards Andromeda, he saw Cepheus and Cassiopeia watching anxiously from the shore near by, and alighted beside them for a hurried consultation. On condition that, if he rescued her, she should be his wife and return to Greece with him, Perseus took to the air again, grasped his sickle and, driving murderously from above, beheaded the approaching monster, which was deceived by his shadow on the sea. He had drawn the Gorgon's head from the wallet, lest the monster might look up, and now laid it face downwards on a bed of leaves and sea-weed (which instantly turned to coral), while he cleansed his

Although there is an element of truth in the disruptive quality of the ekphrases in the novelistic romances, it would be erroneous to undermine the value of such descriptive passages because they disrupt a plot that is too intricate to follow (with numerous plot-lines that unfold simultaneously) even without the descriptive digressions. Instead of perceiving narrative ekphrases as rude interruptions, perhaps considering the visual and spatial potential of these descriptions would serve our understanding of their employment in the text better. Obviously, the writers and rhetoricians of the Second Sophistic developed ekphrastic writing because they wanted the “temporality of discourse, and to freeze it during its indulgence in spatial exploration” (Krieger 7). It is important, therefore, to consider the use and effect of ekphrasis in the Greek novelistic romances in light of the aesthetic and literary mores of a period that appreciated the visual effect of the descriptive in the narrative. Modern readers, as well, bring to the Greek novelistic romances a different set of expectations which are equally liable to be disappointed, since,

For ekphraseis to yield any information it is necessary to take account of the cultural framework within which they were composed. It is therefore important to identify, and, as far as possible, to put aside our modern preconceptions about the role and nature of description as a set-piece entirely separable from any surrounding narrative, whose first duty is to render an objective account of the work described. We must also shed our preconceptions about rhetoric as a dead language dictated by elitist concerns rather than by the needs of communication.

---

hands of blood, raised three altars and sacrificed a calf, a cow, and a bull to Hermes, Athene, and Zeus respectively” (240).

(James and Webb 3).

Our modern prejudice toward the descriptive, often perceiving description as a poor alternative to narrative, was by no means shared by Chariton, Heliodorus, Longus, Achilles Tatius, Lucian, or any other prose-fiction writer of the Hellenistic period. There is a need thus to consider the descriptive passages in the Greek novelistic romances with some caution and an open mind, judging the authors of such ekphrases by the literary aims and standards of their age. Bartsch cautions modern readers and critics against “dismissing elements of the novels out of hand and calling into play standards of plot coherency and relevance that the ancients may not have shared”(5). Evidently, the writers of the Second Sophistic period discerned a fine symbiosis between the narrative and the pictorial, and did not see the one threatening the effect of the other in literary or in oratorical compositions.

All four introductory ekphrases of paintings mentioned earlier are set in a classical world far removed by time and Christianity from that in which the writers of the novels existed and wrote. This tendency toward escaping into a utopian otherworld, a Golden Age whose existence was as real as any other aspect of people’s daily life, is a recurrent element in the Greek novelistic romance. The emergence of the new genre, in fact, is marked by an element of sentimentality toward an ideal past.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Lyman Tower Sargent, in “Utopian Traditions: Themes and Variations,” examines the propensity of medieval writers to portray utopian imagery in their writing extensively. “The Middle Ages are generally thought to have been without serious expressions of utopianism, but in reality they were rife with utopian imagery. [. . .] Designs for the City Four Square, expressions of the desire for the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem, and the search for the location of the actual Eden were common themes; the last of these

The utopian and the pastoral are staple features of medieval Greek prose fiction: there are always hairbreadth escapes, separations, resounding triumphs against overwhelming temptations, miraculous reunions, sensational recognitions, shipwrecks, scenes in courts of law or of exotic potentates, and melodramatic endings where hero and heroine are vindicated before a large concourse of applauding spectators.

Description in the ancient romance is about evenly balanced between the “imitation of things” and the “imitation of authors” (or works of art) first sanctioned by Longinus. The nature of the text as illusion and in its relation to other texts is undoubtedly a theme of some of their descriptions, as of the other references to art or artifice mentioned. There is scarcely a descriptive passage in any of the three complete romances that does not bring into focus the artifice (literal or, in the case of natural descriptions, metaphorical) through which the visual effect described has been achieved, thus drawing attention to its own status as artifice. (Beaton 67).

The Golden Age in Greece having passed, happiness had taken refuge somewhere on earth, trading its temporal identity for a territorialized myth. Here, we reach the source of utopia, somewhere between myth and fable, as these uncertain places inspire tales describing, unverifiable societies, heir to the original happiness, places to which some voyager has supposedly strayed.

---

continued well into the period in which the New World was explored. Later, this concern produced descriptions of imaginary gardens supposed to be modeled on Eden, and the creation of actual gardens intended as representations of Eden. In addition there were tales of the land of Prester John, the islands discovered by St. Brendan and Hy Brasail in medieval Irish literature, the Feast of Fools, and discussions of the Perfect Prince and the Last World Emperor” (9).

Descriptions of gardens like the painted garden-like meadow of the Europa picture and the real garden at Clitophon's home in Tyre are significant not only as tone—setting devices, but, in a much more specific way, as indicators of those locations, whether real or imaginary, that appealed to the sensitivities and aesthetics of the audience that supported with its literary appetites the production of these romances.<sup>22</sup> In *Daph.*, Longus subjects his literary artistry and inspiration to the description of the ethereal natural beauty that characterizes pastoral “gardens of desire.” Longus’ gardens are representative of the enclosed garden as a topos in the Greek novelistic romance. The descriptive details of these pleasure-gardens nurture the bond between the aesthetic and the erotic, offering an escape for both readers and the fictional protagonists.

More specifically, the narrator of *Daph.* supplies two parallel descriptions of how a goatherd by the name of Lamon finds Daphnis by a goat, a shepherd named Dryas find Chloe suckled by a sheep, and continues throughout the narrative with “a delicate balance nature and human nature” (Anderson 137). In due course, the idyllic otherworld of the narrative is established and the couple is placed in their rustic paradise, at one with nature, “in sympathy with spring, and engaged in typically Theocritean pursuits” (137).

---

<sup>22</sup> Before introducing the protagonists of the Ovidian tale that feature in the introductory ekphrasis, the narrator describes in an ekphrasis the idyllic landscape in which the seduction and abduction of Europa occur: “The meadow was in full flower, with trees and shrubs standing guard: adjacent trees wove a lattice roof of leaves, an intertesselation of green branches, a shaded vault for the flowers. The artist had sketched the shadows cast below the leaves, and sunshine filtered in soft splashes onto the meadow through fissures left by the artificer in the leaves above. A colonnade enclosed the meadow on every side: within its cloistered covering the meadow rested secure. At the foot of luxuriant bushes grew beds of flowers in neat rows—narcissus, roses, myrtle. And in the very middle of this picture garden was a flow of water, first bubbling up from deep in the earth and then spreading out over one rivulet with hoe in hand, depicted in the very act of making a channel for this stream” (176).

Book four of *Daph.* begins with an ekphrastic description of autumn, as Lamon prepares his garden for his master's visit. One of Lamon's fellow slaves announces that the master of the estate will come just before the grape harvest to observe the condition of his estate, so Lamon and Daphnis work diligently to make sure everything is in top shape, so they will make a good impression on the master who must approve Daphnis's marriage. It is here that the most impressive part of the enclosed garden is described: an elaborate paradisiacal idyll, at whose center is an altar and a temple adorned with paintings of scenes from the life of Dionysos. The garden's salient features are its size, its situation on high ground, and its variety of vegetation, both cultivated and wild.

The garden was a very beautiful place and bore comparison with royal gardens. [. . .] This was the work of nature, but it also seemed to be the work of art. [. . .] At the midpoint of the length and breadth of the garden was a temple and altar to Dionysus. Ivy surrounded the altar, and vine shoots surrounded the temple. Inside, the temple had paintings of subjects related to Dionysus: Semele giving birth, Ariadne asleep, Lycurgus in chains, Pentheus being torn apart; there were also Indians being conquered and Etruscans changing shape. Everywhere satyrs were treading the grapes; everywhere bacchantes were dancing. And Pan was not forgotten; he sat there too on a rock, playing the Pan-pipes himself, as though he were providing an accompaniment both for the traders and the dancers.<sup>23</sup> (334-35).

---

<sup>23</sup> B. P. Reardon provides a literary and historical background the use and literary evolution of ekphrasis in the Second Sophistic. "The *ekphrasis* of pictures on temple and other walls was a notable feature of writing of the Second Sophistic. We find it in Lucian, Philostratus, and Achilles Tatius (3.7ff.), and there is a famous predecessor in Virgil (*Aeneid* I.446ff.). The paintings represent Dionysus's birth (to Semele), his marriage (to Ariadne), and his vengeance on enemies, both individuals (such as Pentheus) and groups (such as the kidnapping Etruscan pirates he turned into dolphins)" (334).

Meticulously laid out with an eye to every detail, Longus's garden invites the spectator to enjoy its beauties and relish its skillful design. It also invites the reader to consider the rhetorical and symbolic values of its ornamental scheme. "The setting may hint at a divine epiphany of the god Dionysus, but it is in this theatrical space that another revelation takes place, that Daphnis's own identity is disclosed [. . .] A place of work, a place of refuge, a place of schematic order as well as elaborate beauty, it is also social, violent, and sexual" (Zeitlin 161).

In its perfection, this earthly *paradeisos* seems to blossom as a microcosm of the pastoral world at harmony with the larger environment. Longus repeatedly stresses the harmonious collaboration of human art and nature, thus exemplifying a general feature of the pastoral world of the romance. The narrator in *Daph.* describes in an ekphrasis the garden Lamon is preparing for his master's visit in Book four:

The fruit-bearing trees were on the inside, as though protected by the others. The other trees stood around them like a man-made wall, but these were enclosed in turn by a narrow fence. Everything was divided and separate, with each trunk at some distance from its neighbor. But, higher up, the branches joined and intertwined their foliage. This was the work of nature, but also seemed to be the work of art. There were beds of flowers too, some produced by the earth itself, and some by art. Roses, hyacinths, and lilies were the work of human hands; violets, narcissi, and pimpernels were produced by the earth itself. (333).

Detailed descriptions of gardens such as this are generously offered in other Greek novelistic romances as well, and often become sources of inspiration and adaptation when they are revived in the Byzantine verse romances of the Komnenian and Palaiologan periods (1081-1185 and 1261-1453, respectively).<sup>24</sup>

Paradisiacal pleasure-grounds, otherwise known as *loci amoeni*, are a fixed topos of antique literature, and a recurrent feature in the Greek novelistic romances. The loveliness (*amoenus*) is concentrated in a garden or orchard, one of the oldest examples being the garden of Alcinoos, the father of Naucicaa, in *The Odyssey*.<sup>25</sup> There, the fruit of the trees never runs short, winter and summer alike. There are also vineyards and vegetable gardens, all watered by two springs. Judging by the frequent appearance of similar gardens of delight in the Greek novelistic romances, it must have been vitally important to be able to fantasize about a place where everyday worries did not exist and overcompensation was offered in the form of dreams of the ideal life. Herman Pleij, in his study of paradisiacal realms in *Dreaming of Cockaigne*, stresses the diachronic appeal of utopian literature, explaining, “the escape to paradise—a golden age, Cockaigne, or El Dorado—belongs to all times and all cultures, and these dreamlands always reflect the private yearnings and ideals of their creators” (26). The temperate

---

<sup>24</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the evolution and role of ekphrases in the Byzantine romances, see Chapter two of this dissertation, *The Garden in the Byzantine Romances: From Locus Amoenus and Paradisus Terrestris to an Allegorical Garden*.

<sup>25</sup> According to Naucicaa, Alcinoos’s daughter, her father’s pastoral garden consists of a glorious grove “of poplars sacred to Athene / near the road, and a spring runs there, and there is a meadow / about it, and here is my father’s estate and his flowering orchard, / as far from the city as the shout of a man will carry” (Book Six, 291-94).

climate of idyllic gardens along with the fact that they appear to be removed from the bounds of time and reality, nourish the erotic dreams and desires of the characters that enter them and aids the furthering of the narrative plot.

In Achilles Tatius's *LC*, the hero begins his pursuit of Leucippe at the end of Book one in a garden which abounds with erotic overtones. Clitophon begins his task by giving the house slave Satyros (with Leucippe in earshot) a lecture about the power of love among birds (peacock), minerals (magnetite), plants (the palm), waters (the Alpheios loves Aretousa) and even between different species (the viper and the eel).<sup>26</sup>

It was in fact a grove of very pleasant aspect, enclloistered by a sufficiently high wall and a chorus-line of columns that together formed a covered portico on all four sides of the garden. Protected within the columns stood a populous assembly of trees. A network of sturdy branches interlaced to form an intricate pattern wherein petals gently embraced their neighbors, leaves wound round other leaves, and fruits rubbed softly on their fruits. Thus far the world of plants knows intercourse. (186).

The erotic desires of the hero in this pastoral ekphrasis are part of a most harmonious natural scheme according to which, human, plant, and animal are all experiencing the ever-empowering influence of love, which is also presented as a natural phenomenon. In his sophistic discourse on the sweeping effect of love on

---

<sup>26</sup> Philostratus, in *Imagines*, uses ekphrasis in the same manner to describe the nature of the river Alpheios (II, 6, 1), the origin of amber (I, 11), the origin of limestone (I, 12, 2), plants and animals, the relation of trees to soil (I, 9, 1), and even the sexual instinct in date palms (I, 9). "All these curious facts may be supposed to have educational significance, but they are introduced primarily as a rhetorical device to stimulate the interest of the hearer or reader" (xxv).

all species and beings—animate and inanimate alike—the hero claims that “there is such a thing as plant-life passion, and it is particularly pressing in the case of the palm, a species whose members (they say) are distinguished as male and female” and then, of course, “there is the transoceanic wedding of waters: the lover is a river from Ellis, the mistress a spring in Sicily” (189).

In the same idyllic garden where Clitophon had delivered his erotic speech earlier in Book one, the couple meets again to exchange their first passionate kiss in Book two. Finding himself unexpectedly alone with Leucippe in the garden, the hero, quick-wittedly, pretends to have been stung by a bee on his face, having seen Leucippe earlier cure Kleio’s bee-sting with an Egyptian spell mumbled in close proximity to the sting: “In a moment of inspiration,” the hero admits, “I clapped my hand to my face and pretended that I had just been stung and was in pain.” Leucippe, “fortunately” is willing to do the same for Clitophon, which leads to “a steady stream of kisses” (191).

Descriptions of gardens similar to the painted garden-like meadow in the painting of Europa’s abduction and the real garden in Clitophon’s home in Tyre are significant not only because they foreshadow future action, but also because the heroine’s future in the narrative is very much connected with the state of the garden. Shadi Bartsch, in his analysis of *LC*’s ekphrasis of the picture of Europa, concludes that “the picture of Europa not only foreshadows Leucippe’s dangerous journey across the sea and the eventual outcome of sanctioned union, but also Leucippe’s very laxity concerning her own virginity, which she agrees to yield to Clitophon (in Book two), and her readiness to flee with the hero, more it seems

out of pique against her mother than love for the hero" (54). Readers and fictional protagonists alike get involved in an interpretive game that revolves around the narrative ekphrases, exploring the effects the events described in those might reveal as the plot unfolds. For instance, the initial connection established between Europa and Leucippe by the two descriptions of gardens may well lead the readers to suspect that it is the latter who will be abducted.

Bartsch discerns an interdependence between the heroine of the narrative and the heroine of the ekphrasis within the narrative (Leucippe and Europa, respectively) and their respective gardens: "the earlier pictorial description foreshadows the later 'real' one and serves to emphasize the relationship of the acquiescent kidnappee of myth to the real one of the story" (54), is not always an entirely dependable one since descriptions of paintings often play upon the expectations of reader and character by "foreshadowing the same event on several different levels and with several possible interpretations. The descriptions of the painting of Europa, the first picture described, and of Philomela, the last, play similar tricks upon the expectations aroused by the interpretive act, yet in a completely different way" (Bartsch 65).

The erotic, the marvelous, and the pastoral exist in a harmonious symbiosis in Longus' idyllic gardens where Daphnis and Chloe fall in love and learn about their origins. Chloe falls in love with Daphnis at a spring near the cave of the nymphs in Book one. As she glances at the hero's naked body while helping him wash, Daphnis suddenly looks beautiful to her and, not knowing that she is falling in love, only knows that she wants to see Daphnis bathe again. In

the next few days, as Chloe is watching Daphnis play the Pan's pipes and bathe again, she begins to feel the emotional restlessness associated in romance with love (although she does not know what she is suffering, and confused laments her condition). “ ‘Now I feel ill, but I don't know what my illness is; I feel pain, although I have not been injured; I feel sad, although I have lost none of my sheep; I feel hot although I'm sitting in deep shade. How many times I've been scratched by brambles, and I've not wept [ . . . ] But the thing that's stinging my heart now is sharper than all those things' ” (294).

Similarly, in Book two, a new character, old Philetas, tells the couple of a mysterious lush garden and a peculiarly powerful winged creature that lurks in it. The old man tells the couple of an enclosed idyll in which he recently saw a “marvelous young boy” who eluded his attempt to seize him: “a boy, with myrtle berries and pomegranates in his hands. His skin was white like milk, and his hair was reddish-gold like fire, and his body glistened as though he'd just bathed. He was naked and alone and he was enjoying himself fruit picking, as though it was his own garden” (304). The winged creature tells Philetas that he was older than Cronos and Time itself and had known and helped Philetas when he was young, wooing Amaryllis and that he now is watching over Daphnis and Chloe. After this revelation, Philetas digresses into yet another ekphrasis, describing the supreme and irresistible power of love, for which there is no cure except “kissing and embracing and laying naked together” (305).

Love is a god, my children; he is young, beautiful, and winged;  
[ . . . ] he rules the element; he rules the stars; he rules his fellow  
gods—more completely than you rule your goats. [ . . . ] All the

flowers are the work of Love; all the plants are his creation; thanks to him, the rivers flow, the winds blow. I have seen a bull in love, bellowing as though stung by a gadfly, and a he-goat in love with a she-goat, following her everywhere. (306).

In the ekphrases considered thus far, forebodings are predominant and intentional on the part of the narrator. Some ekphrases offer clues to plot and character development, whereas the meaning of others becomes clear once the protagonist offers an exegesis of the event described and its influence on the protagonists' future.<sup>27</sup>

Eroticism and forbidden desire are themes that run as deep in the narrative of the Greek novelistic romances as ekphrastic narrative detours of earthly otherworlds. Detailed descriptions of paintings, objects, and paradisiacal locations aid the narrative development of eroticism in a terrestrial utopian place. More specifically, the description of idealized gardens, both the garden that features in the painting of Europa and that belonging to Clitophon in *LC*, abound with erotic language and sexual innuendoes. All three female classical figures—Europa, Andromeda, and Philomela—are described in erotic terms, half-naked, wearing near-transparent garments, and in such detail, that one cannot possibly

---

<sup>27</sup> Shadi Bartsch elaborates extensively on this point, claiming that “descriptions of artwork and other objects—most notably animals and plants—frequently also function within the narrative as movers of the characters to action or advancers of the plot, as can philosophical and paradoxographical digressions” (148), and “the authors often use innocent-appearing ecphrases to foreshadow an incident, to explain character motivations when these would be less credible otherwise, and to elaborate on points important to the readers' understanding” (170).

There are a number of ekphrases (especially in *LC*) that do not appear relevant to the advancing of the plot, and therefore contribute nothing to our understanding of it. Such descriptive passages function as “tone setters,” Bartsch argues, for the narrative that follows. (155).

disregard the erotic effect of the description on the mood of the narrative that follows.

Dreams also seem to serve well as tone-setters, for it is in dreams that the unrealistic sensory desires of both hero and reader manifest themselves repeatedly. “Dreams seem to hint at future sex and twice show Leucippe stabbed in the groin or lower belly. A philosophical digression discusses the relative merits of hetero- and homosexual love. A priest of Artemis delivers a ribald speech full of sexual innuendo. A lusty (and unfaithful) wife passes a test of her faithfulness by means of a trick clause in the oath she swears” (Bartsch 157). The importance of emotion as both constituent element and effect of vivid description is a recurrent characteristic in ekphrases of paintings from Late Antiquity.

Liz James and Ruth Webb, in their discussion of the potential of ekphrastic narrative to communicate powerful emotions that can affect the mood of the reader, claim that it is practically impossible to separate narrative from emotion in Greek ekphrases, “any more that it is possible to divorce the Gospel stories from their spiritual significance” (10). The detailed ekphrases the protagonists deliver in *LC*, namely, resemble lectures rather than speeches, and this is by no means coincidental; these unusually long speeches not only delay the action, but also embellish it.<sup>28</sup> Narrative ekphrases, thus, also set the tone for the

---

<sup>28</sup> Clinias’s speech against marriage: I. viii. 1-9; Clinias’s lecture on the art of love: I. xi. 2 –x. 7; Clitophon comments on eroticism as it relates to nature: I. xvii. 1 and xviii. 5; Sostratus and Chaerephon comment on the effects of the oracle about Tyre: II. xiv. 2-10; Conops and Satyrus carry a sophisticated contest of fable telling: II. xx. 3 – xxii. 7; and finally, Menelaus and Clitophon ponder the advantages of homosexual versus heterosexual love: II. xxxv and xxxviii.

It is worth pointing out here that the literary objectives of the writers of medieval Greek prose fiction extended beyond entertainment. To classical Greeks, the doctrine of art for art’s sake would have appeared preposterous. “Literature was an essential commodity, which like other commodities must be as

action that follows the descriptive interruptions.

Descriptive passages often function as illuminators of the text, and as such, they can offer valuable information about those realms (utopian and dystopian, real and imaginary) that the Greek prose writers of the Roman Imperial period set out to describe and discover in their narratives. Ekphrasis as a rhetorical mode and therefore, is a literary topos in the study of medieval Greek and Byzantine utopias. Rhetorical digressions have the power to generate imagery by focusing on a particular instance or place within the narrative and providing unusually clear insight into medieval Greek writers' perceptions of their immediate surroundings, daily life, and pagan realms that they often explored in their imagination and writings. John Hollander offers useful insight into the study of ekphrasis and its literary and cultural potential, observing that ekphrases "frequently supplant the artists' intended story, or moral, or larger meaning with one of their own. And just as frequently they will uncover deep truths, themselves imageless, that in some way underlie the work of art itself" (80).

*Loci amoeni* are not the only otherworlds that captured the attention of Greek readers of the Roman Imperial period. Alongside the enclosed gardens of perfect bliss, the writers of the Greek novelistic romances juxtaposed realms (real and imaginary alike) that described the East as it had become available to them

---

aesthetically satisfying as expert craftsmanship could make it, but must also serve a useful purpose. The poet was recognized as a responsible teacher; instruction was not merely his privilege but his obligation. [. . .] Our own serious novels, like Attic tragedy, seek to establish or illustrate universal laws of human conduct or to promote certain moral attitudes. Both these motives are to be found in the Greek novel also, but their unfamiliar direction makes them hard to recognize, and their apparent absence has given these books an unfair reputation for frivolity" (Hadas viii-ix).

through history, fable, and folklore. *The Alexander Romance*, a literary amalgam of myth, legend, history, and folklore of late antiquity (c. AD 300), abounds with ekphrastic digressions that describe in realistic details imaginary peoples and lands the conqueror and his troops came into contact in their conquest of “the orient.”<sup>29</sup> The treatment of Alexander’s conquests in the Romance (in Egypt, Persia, and India) is “as much a part of Greek history as of oriental tradition” and “the elaboration of Alexander’s achievements in popular tradition is the stuff of popular hero-legend, regardless of nationality” (Anderson 96).

In *AR*, heavenly, earthly, pagan, and Christian elements are hopelessly intertwined in descriptive passages that depict idealized terrains. The real Alexander’s restless curiosity is transfigured through the medium of myth, as he reaches through darkness for the ends of the earth and the Land of the Blest, and as he probes the depths of the sea and observes from the heights of the sky the slightness of the world he is conquering.<sup>30</sup>

The Macedonian’s search for paradise is described in detailed narrative, the popularity of which confirms the everlasting appeal of the hero’s legend and

---

<sup>29</sup> The legend of Alexander permeated the medieval world, and its written version, the *Alexander Romance*, appears in a number of medieval languages, often in multiple copies and editions. The image of the conqueror has come down to us (through all these versions) filtered and refracted by layers of fable, history, emotion, all of which make a reliable historical account of Alexander’s conquests hard to draw.

<sup>30</sup> In Greek, *AR* was by far the most popular and widely read of all the novelistic romances. His author, who is thought of more as a compiler than a creative author, lived in Alexandria between A.D. 140 and 340 and his subject was not who Alexander was, but what Alexander meant half a millennium after his death. “A fairly ignorant Alexandrine compiler worked the material from both these major sources into a composite whole, and added a few of his own inventions for good measure” (Pritchard 4). Despite the failing of its author, the book had a phenomenal success and the character of Alexander described in it, was to dominate the minds of readers and audiences for thousands of years. Its influence is also manifested in the numerous translations of the work—“its influence reached as far as India and Java in the east, and from Byzantium it found its way to almost all Slavic countries” (Pritchard 5).

the “wonderlands” that lay in the far East. Barely revealed to the gaze of the saints, paradise obstinately evades the quests of heroes, and Alexander in particular. “In pseudo-Callisthenes’ *Historia Alexandri magni* (the *Alexander Romance*), written between 200-100 BCE and 200-300 CE, the conqueror makes several painful attempts to find it. Reaching a region of shadows while trying to find the country of the Blessed, Alexander unwittingly comes upon the fountain of Immortality” (Lecoq and Schaer 55).

Displaced to a location in “the Orient,” Alexander, not unlike most medieval people, believed that Paradise was a very real place located somewhere in the East, where light comes from, where the sun rises and sets. Saint Thomas Aquinas, in *Summa Theologica*, confirms the existence of a terrestrial paradise in the East, explaining that “it was fitting that it should be in the east, for it is to be believed that it was situated in the most excellent part of the earth. Now the east is the right hand of the heaven [. . .] and the right hand is nobler than the left; hence it was fitting that God should place the earthly paradise in the east” (44).

Reaching a region of shadows while trying to find the country of the Blest, Alexander unwittingly comes upon the fountain of immortality: “Traveling again, we came in two days to a region where the sun does not shine. There lies the Land of the Blest. [. . .] so, traveling on from there for three days, we found a misty place” (709); another time, having reached what he thinks are the limits of the earth, “where the sky touched the earth,” in Book three, the Greek commander tries with an ingenious contraption’s help to rise into the air until two birds with

human faces warn him in Greek: “Alexander, why do you tread the land that is God’s alone? Turn back poor man, turn back; you will not be able to tread the Isles of the Blest. Turn back, human being; tread the land that is granted you and do not bring trouble upon yourself!” (711).

Motivated by his fascination with the East and his desire to locate Paradise, the Greek conqueror comes across the land of the Brahmans, or *Gymnosophistai*, “naked philosophers,” in Book three.

King Alexander traveled to them in peace. And he saw many woods and many extremely beautiful trees with all sorts of fruit and a river encircling that whole land, whose water was translucent, white as milk, and countless palm trees laden with fruit, and the vine rods with a thousand bunches of grapes, gorgeous and enticing. (717).

During his long journey, Alexander reportedly heard of their existence, which prompted him to exchange letters with their king, Dindimus: upon being asked by Alexander to explain the Brahman way of life, Dindimus complied, emphasizing, however, that they had no need for Alexander’s civilizing interference. Based on Alexander’s accounts, these noble savages lived according to the laws of nature and made no effort to resist them. Rhetoric, philosophy, and education in general are not practiced, since such activities had a pernicious influence on the natural order of things. When Alexander asks their leader if his people owned property, the leader’s response is clear: “ ‘Our property is the land, the trees, that bear fruit, the light, sun, moon, the troupe of stars, the water. When we are hungry, we go to the leafy trees and eat the fruit that grows of its own

accord” (720). The Brahmans are certainly not in need of organized education, a statement which Alexander finds morose, as they have never been tempted to use knowledge to wield power, either over each other or over other peoples.

Elsewhere, in the *Letter to Aristotle About India*, and in the *Historia de Preliis—The J' Version* (probably composed before A.D. 1100), Alexander inquires about the possibility of seeing some other thing “worthy of admiration and history” (Pritchard 103), and, on the advice of two Indians, decides to consult the oracular trees of the Sun and the Moon. After an exhausting march, Alexander and a few companions arrive at the sacred spot: “He found there a truly amazing place with threshold, windows and gates all of gold, and that place was called the House of the Sun. There, was also a temple there, all of gold, and before its doors stood a golden vine bearing grapes of pearls including large single ones” (Pritchard 103). In this idyllic place, at the crossroads of the Golden Age and the Garden of Eden, Alexander is confronted with his destiny. Asked three times (at sunset, moonrise, and sunrise), the trees can tell him only of his coming death, which even his possession of the universe cannot spare him. “The three sisters who are the goddesses of the fates—Clotho (the summons), Lachesis (haphazard destiny) and Atropos—will be angry with me for putting an obstacle in the way of what they have determined. And so you will not die by sword as you expect but by poison, and in a short time you will be lord of the earth” (Pritchard 105). He can only return to Babylon and continue to the end of the road.

Regardless of how far-fetched these descriptions might appear to the modern reader, ekphrastic passages that project utopian terrestrial realms share an element of geographic realism that the audience of such literature would have found, undoubtedly, appealing. Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius' geographic descriptions (particularly of idyllic locations in *Aith.* and *LC*) abound with ethnographic information and cultural details, which, although often quite inaccurate, make their descriptions somewhat credible and realistic. Such geographic digressions would not have surprised the audience of the Greek novelistic romance that, according to Morgan and Bartsch, "had grown fond of such descriptions:"

Because the conditions described are the ones treated in many of the geographic and historiographic works available, the descriptions seem more or less realistic to them. Similarly, many of the descriptions, because they reflect a literary tradition of historiography and may not have been particularly accurate itself, are equally inaccurate, yet the general readers had no more empirical measure of accuracy. (Bartsch 162).

The repeated transition from artwork to reality and vice-versa that occurs in the ekphrastic passages within the narrative, assists a sense of geographic realism and familiarity (on the part of the reader) with a utopian realm that comes across as real, although more often than not, fictional, as it shares aesthetic details from classical themes that the reader would have found familiar.<sup>31</sup> Shadi Bartsch, for

---

<sup>31</sup> Alongside with the effects of realism and familiarity that feature in ekphrases of utopian Greek realms, goes persuasion, one of the functions of classical ekphrasis, which however disguised in the ekphrastic narratives considered thus far, remains a staple characteristic of the Sophistic use of the term. "The vivid

instance, argues that scenes like those of Nile's swamps were particularly popular, thus, by employing them into their ekphrases, Greek authors set the groundwork for a somewhat "credible" story—a successful "merging of the historiographic and pictorial traditions" (165).

The anonymous *AR* is characteristic of the literary attempts of the Greek writers of the Roman Imperial period to create fiction that was appealing to both the imaginary quests and the realistic aspirations of their audiences. Creativity and pseudo-history blend in a narrative mix of realism and outrageousness in the medieval Greek novelistic romances and neither the reader nor the protagonists in the narrative seem alarmed by the new literary collaboration. Graham Anderson, who has studied the effect of this creative amalgam of different literary, folkloric, and historical features on the Greek genre, perceives the Greek novelistic romances primarily as social documents, explaining, "ancient fiction was capable of imitating history closely or at a distance, according to the capability and convenience of the writer. It was also capable of being history, in the sense of chronicling erotic legends that were genuinely felt to have happened" (102). My goal in the following three chapters is to study the narrative material of the Greek and Byzantine romances within the cultural context (a period with its own needs, demands, and expectations) of an era that allowed such literature to flourish. Within this context, consideration of propriety, popular taste, and audience demand will also claim its place.

---

account of events which characterizes ekphrasis was seen as a powerful means of persuasion. This was the function of ekphrasis in classical rhetoric, for such accounts were thought to reach beyond the listener's intellect to their emotions by involving them in the scene evoked" (James and Webb 7).

Ekphrases of artworks and classical realms often *appear* as autonomous entities in the narrative of the Greek novelistic romances, yet, the overall effect is that of deceit. By employing familiar themes and in the descriptions of paintings, statues, and gardens as parallel backgrounds with which the protagonists and the readers are expected to identify, the authors of the Greek novelistic romances strive to establish historical credibility for and within the narrative; they also try to gain the trust of the readers by investing in the visual possibilities of the descriptive. “A propensity to see real things in terms of their painted or sculpted appearance,” Bartsch observes, “and to propose to the readers that characters and places resemble those in paintings that readers might have seen, suggests that such an approach might create a particularly vivid mental picture in the reader’s minds; in other words, it argues for the general strength of the impressions left by the visual media of the plastic arts” (166).

The authors of *The Progymnasmata* and Hermogenes in particular, refer repeatedly to the communicative immediacy and the visual implications of narrative, noting that the language of ekphrasis should “bring about sight through sound or that it should turn listeners into spectators”: “δει την ερμηνειαν για τις ακοης σχεδον την οψιν μηχανασθαι” (*Rhetores Graeci* 27). Considering the role of the ekphrases in the Greek novelistic romances as isolated and autonomous in the narrative, is just as problematic as dismissing such descriptive passages as irrelevant to the plot’s advancement or as merely decorative digressions.

My study of descriptive narrative in the Greek romances thus far has helped me discern a complex and dynamic relationship, a peculiar literary symbiosis between the ekphrases and the framing narrative.<sup>33</sup> Ekphrastic descriptions require a harmonious collaboration of three different media of communication—the narrative, the visual, and the artistic—in order to assume their rightful place in the text as enhancers of meaning.<sup>34</sup> They also aid communication between the visual information communicated in the narrative and the reader’s interpretive powers for the ekphrasis to assume meaning.<sup>35</sup> My attempt to understand and relate the Greek novelistic romances’ descriptive passages to their surrounding text in this chapter has led me to the conclusion that word and image perform a parallel function within these ekphrases, and thus, in conjunction with the visual image projected in the text, I find the study of narrative’s power to conceive, depict, and communicate utopian hopes and dystopian fears essential to understanding changes in medieval Greek and Byzantine people’s cultural needs and literary sensibilities.

---

<sup>33</sup> Bartsch captures the essence of this interaction when he points out that “Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus make of the novel a form that plays with and undermines this conventional relation of image and viewer, text and narrates; in its most sophisticated appearance, the ancient novel, for all its analogies to the arts, is the only form of artistic creation that asserts its own volition over that of the reader / spectator” (177).

<sup>34</sup> After all, according to Hermogenes, ekphrasis is “λογος περιγηματικος,”— “word,” the purpose of which is “to lead [someone] around.”

<sup>35</sup> James Heffernan explores the dynamism and literary adaptability of the rhetorical mode of ekphrasis in his book, *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashberry* (1993). Heffernan perceives Ekphrasis as “dynamic and obstetric; it typically delivers from the pregnant moment of visual art its embryotically narrative impulse, and thus makes explicit the story that visual art tells only by implication” (5).

## CHAPTER II

**The Garden in the Byzantine Romances:  
From *Locus Amoenus* and *Paradisus Terrestris* to an  
Allegorical Garden**

Ευθυσ γαρ ως εξ' απαρχης παραδεισος ευρεθη  
καρπους και οπωρας, χαριτας, ανθη και φυλλα γεμων,  
απο πνοης την ηδονην απο των λογων εχων,  
εκ δε της οψεως αυτης μειζονα παλιν χαριν.

*Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* (282-85)<sup>1</sup>

For we *act* only under the fascination of the impossible: which is to say that a society incapable of generating—and of depicting itself to—a utopia is threatened with sclerosis and collapse. Wisdom—fascinated by nothing—recommends an existing, a *given* happiness, which man rejects, and by this very rejection becomes a historical animal, that is, devotee of *imagined* happiness.

E. M. Cioran, *History and Utopia*, 81.

---

<sup>1</sup> The following prose translation by Gavin Betts appears the only dual language edition of *KC*. “The very first thing was a lovely garden [a paradise] laden with crops of fruit, with charms, with flowers, and leaves. In fragrance, it gave a pleasure beyond words, but its appearance provided an even greater delight” (42).

An English language translation of all five Komnenian romances (*AK, DA, DC, HH, RD*) by Elizabeth Jeffreys is forthcoming.

The word “παράδεισος” is used in *KC*’s context to describe the divine nature of the terrestrial garden in which hero and heroine seek refuge. According to folkloric Byzantine lore, Paradise was a real place on earth, situated in the East, “far beyond India and even beyond the Ocean. Pseudo-Basil the Great (PG 30:64B) describes it as a place of marvelous beauty, brilliance, and security, knowing neither winds nor hail, free from humidity, heat, and cold” (*Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* 1582).

Rhetorical descriptions of terrestrial idylls are the most common link between the Greek novelistic romances and their Byzantine successors, the verse romances of the Palaiologan and Komnenian periods. In the Byzantine revival of the genre in the Komnenian and Palaiologan periods (1081-1185 and 1261-1453 respectively),<sup>2</sup> enclosed gardens emerge as opulent terrains in which the destiny and longings of the amorous protagonists come together in the garden's enchanted grounds. Secluded and removed from reality by mysterious workings, Byzantine *loci amoeni* provide an emotional escape for the hero and heroine and a secure link between the impossible and the desirable.<sup>3</sup> Within the walls of the fictional garden, the erotic and the pastoral exist in a harmonious symbiosis and the protagonists' decisions are influenced by the whims of Chance, the Fates, and "Eros the King," who reigns supreme over animate and inanimate creation—in

---

<sup>2</sup> Although the production of secular literature ceased between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the influence of the already written Greek novelistic romances did not disappear entirely from the literary scene. Suzanne MacAlister offers evidence that suggests that some Greek novelistic romances like those of Achilles Tatius [*LC*] and Heliodorus [*Aith.*] "continued to be known and read to some degree during the years following the genre's death. Interest seems to have intensified with the renaissance in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, after which, references to the works steadily increase over the next few centuries, prior to the learned revival of the genre in the 12<sup>th</sup> century" (309).

Albin Lesky cautions against generalizing about the end and rebirth of the Greek romance, warning against "the whims of transmission [that] have deprived us of a great deal and the chronological distance between the literature of the Greek romance and its rigorous revival in the Byzantine era may be less than we think" (857-58).

<sup>3</sup> Frequently, the garden in the Byzantine romances is the scene for erotic action. A. R. Littlewood in "Romantic Paradises: The Role of the Garden in the Byzantine Romance" (1979) mentions "seven gardens for love-making [*LC, DA, KC, BC, TA*] and one, chronologically the first in the series, for rape [*LC*]; in four the hero receives the divine commandment that he is to fall in love with the heroine [*BC, LR*]; in one the heroine is similarly charged [*TA*]; in one the lovers receive a prophesy of their future [*LR*]. Seven gardens belong to or are otherwise connected with Eros [*Daph., LC, KC, BC, LR, TA*], and two are sacred to Dionysos [*Daph., DC*].

the enchanted garden hero and heroine either reunite or become converts of Eros through a series of tests and revelations.<sup>4</sup>

The construct of the Byzantine garden as it emerges in the narrative of the Byzantine verse romances is a peculiar cross of Christian appropriation of classical sources and allegory, influenced by both Frankish and Middle-Eastern literary tastes. In this chapter, I will examine the literary evolution of the Byzantine *locus amoenus* in rhetorical descriptions of walled *gardens of desire* and enchanted castles in ten Byzantine romances.<sup>5</sup> Five of the Byzantine verse romances I will analyze are products of the Komnenian period (1081-1185), namely, Konstantinos Manasses' *Aristandros and Kallithea* [AK], Niketas Eugenianos' *Drossila and Charikles* [DC], Eustathios Makrembolites' *Hysmine and Hysminias* [HH], Theodore Prodromos' *Rhodanthe and Dosikles* [RD], the anonymous *Digenes Akrites* [DA], and five are vernacular romances written during the Palaiologan period (1261-1453), namely, *Belthandros and Chrysantza* [BC], *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* [KC], *Libistros and Rhodamne* [LR], *The Tale of Achilles* [TA], and *The Tale of Troy* [TT].<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Christianity's influence on the conception and development of the idealized garden is evident in the Byzantine romances. Delumeau notes that "the first Christian writers rejected the myths of the Golden Age and the Happy Isles. But beginning in the second century these myths were gradually Christianized" (11).

<sup>5</sup> Possession plays a prime role in descriptions of Byzantine gardens. Just like the vastness, opulence, and regularity of a rather contemporary "garden," the Versailles, symbolized the greatness and glory of Louis XVI's autocratic reign, elaborate gardens (usually within the confines of a Byzantine *καστρον*, castle, or a fort) testify to the wealth and power of their owners. The Byzantine proto-romance *DA* provides ample proof of this notion, since the greatness of the hero is proportionally reflected in the acquisition of wealth, servants, material possessions, and the building of an impressive castle by the banks of the Euphrates.

<sup>6</sup> The genre of romance is receptive to utopian and dystopian descriptions, making possible (at least in its narrative) what in reality is simply impossible. Northrop Frye expresses the literary possibilities romance has afforded readers and audiences throughout the years, and attributes the lasting appeal of the genre to its ability to "dissolve the boundaries between the actual and the potential, offering a vision of the impossible, or future, or ideal" (Radford 9-10).

In addition to studying how utopian thinking is manifested in the fictional construct of the Byzantine garden, I will study the literary expression of the Byzantine *locus amoenus* within a courtly milieu, taking into account significant historical and literary influences (both Arabic and Frankish) that prompted the evolution of the fictional garden in the Byzantine romances. I will also consider the topographical position of the capital of Byzantium and its contribution to the hybrid thematic nature of the Komnenian and Palaiologan romances.

### **The Emergence of the Byzantine Garden: Some Historical Considerations**

The development of medieval Greek secular literature is conspicuously inconsistent, with three vibrant, although short-lived, periods of impressive development and a remarkably long period of literary hibernation that lasted almost nine centuries (from the end of the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century).<sup>7</sup> After the decline of the Hellenistic cities, “an urban revival took place from about the ninth until the eleventh or twelfth centuries. This development no doubt led to a new demand for pleasure gardens, and it would be unlikely that with regard to the layout and design of these new [Byzantine] gardens, the tradition of late antiquity was resumed without any changes; [. . .] the

---

<sup>7</sup> We have evidence that discontinuity was a remarkable phenomenon between late antiquity and the Byzantine period, even if different opinions exist about its extent. Cyril Mango refers to a “dramatic break between the lifestyle of Late Antiquity and that of the Byzantine Middle Ages” [“Daily Life in Byzantium,” *JOB* 31.2 (1981):338]; Charalampos Bouras mentions a “fundamental break in the evolution of the cities” [“City and Village: Urban Design and Architecture,” *JOB* 31.2 (1981): 612]; and *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* states about Byzantine cities: “In the 7<sup>th</sup> c., cities underwent fundamental and permanent transformations as they reduced in size and population; their public works and services came to an end. They generally became ruralized” (Kazhdan, *ODB*, 1:346).

subsequent urban revival probably allowed new influences to be more easily introduced” (Wolschke-Bulmahn 8).<sup>8</sup>

Numerous hypotheses have been put forth regarding the rapid decline of Greek secular literature at the end of the Hellenistic period (4<sup>th</sup> c. AD) and its continuing obscurity through the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the most influential of which has been articulated by Cyril Mango. Mango considers the rise of Christianity to prominence, the crises caused by heresy, and the late formation of cultural centers in Byzantium as significant developments that affected artistic and literary appetites in the eastern Latin capital. In *Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome*, he accounts for the rise of secular and utopian literature in Byzantium around 1100, explaining that the novelistic romance of the Hellenistic period was threatened by Christianity and, as a result, fell out of style as the new religion gained strength.<sup>9</sup>

Mango’s argument is central to my analysis of Byzantine utopias, since in the Byzantine revival of the Greek genre descriptions of idyllic enclosures become increasingly more allegorical and ekphrasis evolves (as a mode of expression and literary representation) to serve the demands of a new era by projecting classical ideas, appropriated and infiltrated with Christian doctrines.

The study of Byzantine ekphrasis would be incomplete, in other words, without

---

<sup>8</sup> See “The Study of Byzantine Gardens: Some Questions and Observations” in Littlewood, Maguire, and Wolschke-Bulmahn (eds), *Byzantine Garden Culture*.

<sup>9</sup> “As the cities declined, the reading public began to diminish. It is certainly no accident that polite literature ceased to be produced. We are greatly indebted to the small band of educated civil servants and clergymen who presided over the transmission of the antique heritage in the ninth and tenth century, but we cannot describe them as constituting a sufficient forum for the production of a literature whose aim was to entertain and to please. Only when the cities revived in about the eleventh century were more favourable conditions once again introduced: this is fully confirmed by the writings that have come down to us. Take one example, that of the erotic novel, an antique genre that had died in the third century A.D. and suddenly re-appeared in the Comnenian period. [. . .] The important consideration is that such works, whose only purpose was to amuse and titillate, began to be composed once again, indeed by prominent poets” (237).

the consideration of the socio-political upheavals and crises that shaped the livelihood of the Byzantine state and people from the 13<sup>th</sup> century until the fall of Constantinople to the Seljuk Turks in 1453.<sup>10</sup>

The City of Constantine had a spectacular topographical position at a crossroads between East and West, and strove to maintain an independent character by allying neither with the East nor the West, absorbing instead influences from western *and* eastern traditions.<sup>11</sup> As a result, this cultural diversity allowed for numerous influences (Arabic and Frankish) that are captured in the descriptions of articles of clothing, textiles, architectural designs, and ekphrases of castles in the Byzantine romances.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout the history of the Byzantine Empire both East and West proved as much sources of artistic and cultural influence, as of destruction and subordination, which at different times strove to subdue the influence of

---

<sup>10</sup> It is important to take into account the social and historical circumstances that surround the birth of any literary work, and even more important to trace any relationships the creation of utopian narrative in with the socio-historical circumstances the author of the work was writing under. Northrop Frye's commentary on different types of utopias—"Varieties of Literary Utopias," found in *Utopias and Utopian Thought* has offered a model for the approach of the romances I am considering here. Frye argues that "the utopian writer looks at the ritual habits of his own society and tries to see what society would be like if these ritual habits were made more consistent and more inclusive. But it is possible to think of a good many ritual habits as not so much inconsistent as unnecessary or superstitious. Some social habits express the need of society; others express its anxieties. And although we tend to attach more emotional importance to our anxieties than to our needs or genuine beliefs, many anxieties are largely or entirely unreal" (39).

<sup>11</sup> In terms of geographical extension, influence, and political power, the Early Byzantine State (324-760) was by far greater to the middle (1070-1204) and the late (1204-1453) and much advanced in cultural achievement in comparison to the Komnenian and Palaiologan periods that followed, because "the early period integrated Christianity within the Graeco-Roman tradition; it defined Christian dogma and set up the structures of Christian life; it created Christian literature and a Christian art. There is barely an institution or idea in the entire Byzantine panoply that did not originate in the early period" (Mango 4). By the eighth century the Byzantine state had shrunk to the size of modern Turkey and Greece.

<sup>12</sup> The cultural and literary diversity of Byzantium is wonderfully captured in Constantinople's heterogeneous identity. Cyril Mango reveals that, "provincials of all kinds had either settled there or could drift in and out of commercial or official business" and that "all seventy two tongues known to man were represented in it," not to mention "the servile class that included many barbarians" (16). Mango's analysis of the heterogeneous linguistic make-up of the Constantinople is quite intriguing and offers useful information on the development of Byzantine literature in general.

Byzantium.<sup>13</sup> Arabic raids along the eastern Byzantine borders started becoming ever more threatening after the rise of Islam in the Arab world, from the late 7<sup>th</sup> century onwards.<sup>14</sup> In addition to this exterior political threat, Byzantine literary production was devastated by the iconoclastic controversy, from the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century until the restoration of religious icons to Orthodox worship in 843.<sup>15</sup> This restoration, in turn, affected significantly the ruling of the Empire and influenced literary tastes in the next three centuries, as the Byzantine church was placed (in power and influence) over the Emperor; in fact, it was not until the 12<sup>th</sup> century, a time of prosperity if not military strength, that Byzantine literature became more developed and diverse than it had been at any time since the 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>16</sup>

Considering the political turmoil that preceded the renaissance of the new genre, the revival of Greek utopian literature in the 12<sup>th</sup> century Byzantium

---

<sup>13</sup> In reality, the Byzantine Empire never existed as an entity. What did exist, however, was a Roman State centered on Constantinople. Its inhabitants proudly called themselves “Ρωμαιοι,” (Romans), or Christians, and their country Ρωμανια (Romania), a term also mentioned in the *Digenes* romance. Cyril Mango notes that “a man could describe himself as *Byzantios* if he was a native of Constantinople, not if he hailed from another part of the empire. To western Europeans, for whom the words “Roman” (up to the 11<sup>th</sup> century) and “Latins” (from the 11<sup>th</sup> century on) had an entirely different connotation: the ‘Byzantines’ were usually known as Graeci, and the Slavs as *Greki*, but to the Arabs and Turks, as Rum, that is Romans. In Arabic (and in Russian) the word for Constantinople was and still remain Rum). The term Byzantinus, as a designation of the Empire and its inhabitants, did not gain currency until the Renaissance” (3-4).

<sup>14</sup> From the founding of Byzantium in 324 until the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453, Byzantine borders and territories were always in flux, although the City itself was never in doubt, except during the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade in 1204. During the early Byzantine period (324 – 760) Byzantium and Byzantine territories embraced the entire Mediterranean basin; in the middle period (1070 – 1204) Byzantine rule in Mediterranean territories was reduced to southern Italy, Sicily, Asia Minor, and the Balkans. Finally during the late Byzantine period (1204-1453) Byzantium included only Constantinople and some territories in Asia Minor and Greece.

<sup>15</sup> The iconoclastic controversy refers to the deliberate destruction of all religious images the imperial government could find.

<sup>16</sup> After this brief period of political, cultural, and literary recovery, the conquest of Byzantium during the Fourth Crusade in 1204 was a decisive blow to Byzantines and marked a new period during which the writers turned to research rather than to creative literature, although a few did compose.

appears neither coincidental nor unexpected. The Byzantine literary romance with its utopian references did not reach its apogee until the 13<sup>th</sup> century, when the influence of Islam and Christianity were well under way and when foreign threat was becoming ever more intimidating and real, despite the Emperor and the Patriarchate's reassurance of Byzantium's divinely blessed future.<sup>17</sup> It is plausible then that the Byzantine fascination with idealized, artificially created gardens may be linked to Byzantines' attempts to maintain stability, peace, and prosperity while under the threat of Arabic or Roman conquest.<sup>18</sup>

The earlier Greek novelistic romances, thus, seem to have experienced a second flourishing out of a need to reflect on a new world, a world much different from that presented in the older Greek novelistic romances.<sup>19</sup> In the 12<sup>th</sup> century the Hellenistic novels were confronting a new social and cultural environment and, as a result, the old genre had to fulfill a new purpose, meeting the needs and expectations of a different audience— just like utopian ideas and fantasies, like all

---

<sup>17</sup> From the late 6<sup>th</sup> until the early 8<sup>th</sup> century, a time that coincides with the birth of Islam, there is a significant decline of Byzantine literature, both in volume and variety. The Muslim conquest of the southern territories of the Byzantine Empire (Syria, Jordan, and Egypt) in 639 devastated ordinary people and the literary production in their nearby regions. Aleksei Kazhdan and Ann Wharton Epstein attribute such a literary and artistic decline to the Empire's economic and military troubles (especially from the late 6<sup>th</sup> to the late 7<sup>th</sup> century). It was not until the late 8<sup>th</sup> century that it became possible again to write against iconoclasm, and Byzantine literature began to recover.

<sup>18</sup> In an effort to place the Byzantine romances in the cultural and historical milieu of the 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> century, I have found Gerard Genette's model of narrative analysis (also adopted by Roderick Beaton) particularly useful. According to Genette, "literature does not merely 'reflect' the historical process but is an active component within it; and the act of literary creation is simultaneously of process of reading literary texts already in existence, and of responding to a unique and real situation in the historical world" (Beaton 5).

<sup>19</sup> The late Hellenistic world that emerges from the Greek novelistic romances was one in which isolated individuals struggled for control over their lives. Suzanne MacAlister points out the serious effect a capricious Chance had on the shaping of people's lives, noting that "people were experiencing themselves as potential victims of Chance, and were seeking security and identity either in other human beings or in one or several gods of personal religion. For the Greeks of this early era, then, the novel expressed familiar fears and aspirations" (309). The capriciousness of Chance is also another feature of the Greek novelistic romance that Christian audiences would have found misguided, even foreign or repellent.

ideas and fantasies, grow out of society to which they are a response, utopian descriptions and literary allusions to love (manifested in the 12<sup>th</sup> century romances) are rooted in time and place, and are bound to reproduce problematic aspects of the particular world they originated.<sup>20</sup> Since neither the ancient world nor the modern world is an unchanging entity, “any analysis of utopian thinking which neglects social changes in the course of the history of either antiquity or modern times is likely at some point to go badly wrong” (*Utopianism Ancient and Modern* 180).

Descriptions of idyllic locations in the Byzantine romances are unusually diverse, partly because they reflect the diversity of the peoples and traditions that were united within the large territory that made the Byzantine Empire<sup>21</sup>—utopian gardens in the Byzantine romances resemble a hybrid plant, “born of the crossing of a paradisiacal, otherworldly belief of Judeo-Christian religion with the Hellenic myth of an ideal city on earth” (Manuel and Manuel 15). Manuel’s observation is particularly relevant with regard to the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> century romances. Byzantine readers and literary audiences were fascinated with the secular literature of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Byzantium, and scholarship, particularly literary criticism on

---

<sup>20</sup> Classicists in the past have dismissed the Byzantine (“learned”) romances as “slavish imitations” of ancient models—those of the Greek novelistic romances of antiquity, overlooking a substantial number of unique literary and stylistic traits of the Byzantine romance that have no Hellenistic roots. The study of those unique traits—one of which is the representation of utopian realms in the Byzantine narrative—can offer useful information on contemporary Byzantine society and culture.

<sup>21</sup> Most medieval scholars tend to regard Byzantine literature and art as only a poor mimesis of Classical models, a misconception which has been taken up seriously by recent scholars who strive to point out the diversity and originality of Byzantine culture. The appropriation of ancient themes and tropes was diversified, and, as Alexander Kazhdan notes in “Innovation in Byzantium,” “the great past, whether Biblical or Hellenic, the linkage with Jerusalem and Athens, created an imaginary stability. Each phenomenon had an analogy in the past and therefore a place in the historical process or, theologically, in the economy of salvation. The people were always ‘like’ (or ‘unlike’)—like Christ, Joseph, Alexander the Great, or greater than Pericles or Sulla. The past was here, was attainable, familiar, comfortable. It was imitated—but not mechanically. Purposefully.” (12).

Byzantine culture over the course of the past four decades, attests to this more sophisticated and less dismissive point of view.

Although many questions about ancient Greek and Byzantine readers can not be fully answered, it is worth attempting some understanding of the sort of mentality the audiences Byzantine writers aimed to please and instruct with their texts. A learned revival of the Greek romance occurred in 12<sup>th</sup> century Constantinople,<sup>22</sup> the culture of which had heralded the beginnings of a climate of intellectual and creative activity, and continued for the next two subsequent centuries undisturbed. During the Palaiologan period, an interesting correlation has been observed between the Byzantine revival of Greek romance, and an educated elite's growing taste for the Hellenistic past—it seems that the changing literary preferences of a highly affluent Byzantine audience must have some influence on the themes of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine romances. Mango mentions the existence of “literary salons” in Constantinople in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries in which the Byzantine romances were recited first, and Margaret E. Mullett notes the existence of public readings—“θεατρα” —that nourished the literary tastes of courtly and intellectual circles in Constantinople. The sphere of “polite literature” expanded from a very limited and exclusive aristocratic audience to some educated Byzantines who took it upon themselves to make it available to an even

---

<sup>22</sup> During the two subsequent centuries, other literary works were produced as well, written in the Greek vernacular, and no longer in archaic forms of idiomatic Attic Greek.

wider public.<sup>23</sup>

A closer study of the manuscript tradition, language, and style of the Byzantine romances (of both the Komnenian and the Palaiologan periods) shows that these works were directed to the educated elite.<sup>24</sup> The 11<sup>th</sup> century, a time of unusual development of new ideas, was also a period of great prosperity and security in Byzantium, which in turn assured literary production.<sup>25</sup> Provincial centers started to prosper in 11<sup>th</sup> century Byzantium and there is evidence of the emergence of a middle class with intellectual appetites, “a class of reasonably prosperous and comfortable people below the level of the dominant aristocracy which was in direct communication with the emperor, and from whose ranks emperors could emerge” (Roueche 125).

---

<sup>23</sup> The efforts of Michael Psellus, who tried to make learning and reading in general available to a wider public in Byzantium through a more simplified form (often verse), are testimonies of the future success and popularity of the new literary genre. The reading public of the revived genre was predominantly aristocratic, and, as Cyril Mango notes, “did not cease to exist until the end of the Empire, and it formed the backdrop against which later Byzantine literature ought to be viewed” (237-38). Also, Margaret E. Mullett, in her article “Originality in the Byzantine Letter” (published in *Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art and Music*, ed. A. R. Littlewood, 1995), points out the existence of what appears to be a very organized form of literary readings—*τα θεατρα*—the function of which was crucial to the literary livelihood of Constantinople. “To be exiled from Constantinople at this date meant not only exile from the emotional heart of the empire, from the *theatra* (literary readings) and literary society, but also from participation in major changes in the government of the church” (51).

<sup>24</sup> Roderick Beaton, in *The Medieval Greek Romance*, provides an extensive commentary on the manuscript tradition of the Byzantine romances composed during the Komnenian period and the vernacular romances of the Palaiologan period, considering not only palaeological and codicological information, but also eastern and western literary trends and influences that affected the production and dissemination of these romances. Such influences, appropriated to conform with Christian doctrines, are found well integrated into the Byzantine romances, forming an ‘organic [narrative] synthesis’ as Titos Papamastorakis claims in his evaluation of Byzantine art. “Το σπουδαιο ειναι οτι τα χαρακτηριστικα αυτα δεν αποτελουν στοιχεια που αναπαραγουν τυφλα προτυπα τα οποια προερχονται απο τον αρχαιο κοσμο,[. . .], αλλα ειναι προιοντα μιας νεας οργανικης συνθεσης του Χριστιανικου περιεχομενου με την εικαστικη παραδοση που ειχε καλλιεργηθει στον χωρο της ανατολικης μεσογειακης λεκανης απο την αρχαιοτητα ως τον 11 αιώνα” [“it is worth mentioning that these Byzantine artistic characteristics are not blind reproductions of ancient prototypes, but rather products of a new organic synthesis of Christian doctrines and classical aesthetic traditions that were prominent around the Levant from antiquity to the 11<sup>th</sup> century”] (*Αρχαιολογια*, Vol. 56).

<sup>25</sup> See Kazhdan and Epstein, chapter two.

This educated Byzantine readership was interested not only in romantic material that often and quite freely appropriated Frankish and Arabic influences, but also in epic exploits of Byzantine frontiersmen from the time before the battle of Manzikert in 1071.<sup>26</sup> In the East, real gardens were deliberately modeled upon human concepts of Paradise. A. R. Littlewood notes the “impious attempt by King Shaddad of South Arabia to rival Paradise by constructing his *Garden of Iram* which won the immortality of condemnation in the Qur’an (sura 89) and the honour of eponymous imitation in the Qavam family’s Bagh-i Iram that may still be enjoyed in Shiraz; while in Delhi the Mughals actually dared to inscribe upon the Audience Hall that was surrounded by gardens, ‘If there is Paradise on earth, it is here, it is here, it is here.’” (108).<sup>27</sup> In view of this, how much more natural is it that the fictional gardens of the Byzantine romances should be described in terms of a divine paradise. The connection is made explicit in the proto-romance *Digenes Akrites* [DA] which was well-known in the imperial court circles in the middle part of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The structure of the anonymous romance falls into two parts, each of which forms a coherent whole by itself. The first part tells the story of Digenes’ parents, that of the Arab emir who marries a Byzantine

---

<sup>26</sup> The battle Manzikert, in which the Byzantine was defeated by the Seljuk Turks, is one of the decisive battles of history. In one catastrophic day, the eastern Roman Empire lost its major recruiting region, its major grain-producing region, and its vital route between Constantinople and the wealth of the East. In the spring of 1071, the Byzantine emperor Romanus IV Diogenes tried to extend his influence into parts of Turkish-held Armenia, but a substantial number of his soldiers who were Turkish, sided with the enemy the night before the battle, and as a result the Byzantine army was utterly destroyed. After the battle of Manzikert there was no opposing the Turkish flood, and only the Bosphorus saved the Empire. Anatolia was occupied by the Turks and the Byzantines were confined to the European part of the Empire and a small strip of land along the Bosphorus.

<sup>27</sup> See A. R. Littlewood, “Romantic Paradises: The Role of the Garden in the Byzantine Romance” (1979).

noblewoman and converts to Christianity, and that of their son, Basileios Digenes Akrites.<sup>28</sup>

The narrative starts with the exploits of Digenes' father, a Syrian emir who makes a spectacular raid into Byzantine Anatolia, capturing towns, killing men, and taking women prisoners. Among the prisoners is the daughter of a general whom the emir weds without the consent of the girl's family (after he has converted, along with his retinue, to Christianity). The tale of Digenes follows that of his parents and is told with some gaps and inconsistencies.

While still young, the hero's exceptional prowess and heroic ability are highlighted in his first hunt at the age of twelve, the success in which leads soon to his graduating to bigger game—the abduction of a wife.<sup>29</sup> The hero is obviously imitating his father by following the “family tradition” of carrying off the daughter of a Greek general. After an extravagant wedding, Digenes leaves his parental castle and with his bride, the lovely Eudokia Doukaina, and a few personal attendants, lives a nomadic life among the lonely places of the border as an independent lord. There, while guarding the eastern Byzantine border, and

---

<sup>28</sup> Basileios (Βασίλειος) is the hero's baptismal name; Digenes (Διγενής), the name he is commonly known by, signifies a “double birth” (Di-genos), and encapsulates his exceptional parentage. The title “Akrites,” frontiersman (from the Greek ἀκρῶ) is never really earned in the story, but similarly encapsulates the setting on the turbulent borders between Islam and Christian Byzantium.

<sup>29</sup> Roderick Beaton in “Epic and Romance in the Twelfth Century” explores the origins of “bride-snatching,” an almost forbidden practice in the Byzantine court circles, and accounts for its appearance in the romance of *DA*, considering eastern literary and historical sources. He argues that “it is not very probable that bride-snatching literally was an approved or expected way to win a bride in Byzantine court circles; and what we know of Byzantine diplomatic and dynastic alliances suggests that it was not. Bride-snatching is, however, the norm in the macho imaginative world of *Digenes Akrites* (and may well, of course, reflect a social reality in the turbulent eastern provinces). That it should be introduced in this way, as a departure from ancient precedent, in the [Greek novelistic] romances, suggests that the tales of abduction had a certain literary cachet at the time, and is further proof, if only indirectly, that the epic of *Digenes* was not only well known at court but actually played a part in shaping sophisticated literary tastes at the time” (87-88).

exterminating bands of robbers, the hero abruptly abandons his duties as a borderer and settles for a more tranquil life, building an impressive palace with a garden, both described in detailed ekphrases, by the river Euphrates. Here, not too long afterward, he dies, apparently young, of natural causes; right before he dies, however, Digenes discerns an angel of fire in the sky, and, stricken with fear, calls his wife to whom he announces his imminent death. Eudokia Doukaina expresses her desire to die with him, and the poem ends with the two dying together.

A close study of the vocabulary and literary terminology in the poem *DA* also reveals an Arabic imprint on Byzantine life, especially when it comes to describing cultural artifacts and day-to-day activities.<sup>30</sup> Stylianos Alexiou, who has produced a critical edition of the Escorial manuscript, comments extensively on the Arabic influence manifested in the language of the poem

Στην ιστορική πραγματικότητα του Βυζαντινού βίου ανήκει και σειρά σπανίων τεχνητών ορών που απαντούν στον “Ακριτή” Ε και που δηλώνουν είδη ρουχισμού και οπλισμού κινήσεις του πολεμιστή στον αγώνα, αλογα και σκευη αλογων” (ξα). [. . .] Ο Ακριτής γενικά είναι ενδιαφέρον κείμενο, όχι μόνο για την πρωτοτυπία του, όχι μόνο για την ιστορική πραγματικότητα σε μακρινές γεωγραφικές περιοχές

---

<sup>30</sup> The setting of the poem, the frontier between the Christian Empire of Byzantium, or ‘Romania’ as it is called in the text, accounts for many cultural influences between the two worlds manifested in Greek and Arabic literature. Roderick Beaton describes this Greco-Arabic trade as literary trade, noting that, “[. . .] these twelfth-century Christian epics have their Muslim counterparts, also written down surprisingly long after the events they describe. The Arabic *Delhemma* and *Sayyid Battal* date from the twelfth century, the Turkish *Danishmendname* from the fourteenth (and presumably derive from Arabic sources). All three Muslim epics deal with frontier strife the same historical period and in the same geographical areas as *Digenes*, and the name Akrites can be discerned, although in a minor role, in all three” (32-33).

οχι μονο για τον σπανιο γραμματολογικο χαρακτηρα και τη γλωσσα του (που εσημειωσε το παλαιοτερο γνωστο ξεπερασμα του αρχαισμου στη λογοτεχνια μας), αλλα και για την ποιητικη του αξια, οσο μακρινη κι αν ειναι αυτη για τον ανθρωπο της εποχης μας (ρμ).<sup>31</sup>

The many gardens and parks of Constantinople are primarily known to historians today through descriptions in texts, which take many forms, from brief mentions in histories and chronicles, to longer ekphrastic descriptions in prose or in verse.<sup>32</sup> Descriptions of walled gardens in the Komnenian and Palaiologan romances are remarkably similar to actual Byzantine gardens that bore Arabic influences in their conception, design, and building. From the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> century in particular, traces of contact with the Islamic world are perceptible in Byzantine culture, and foreign influence is manifested in both Byzantine literature and architecture.

The reign of Emperor Theophilos, the last of the Iconoclast Emperors (829-42), is considered as the epoch of strongest influence on the Byzantine world by Arab culture. Wolschke-Bulmahn identifies Arab influences in the “gorgeous

---

<sup>31</sup> Rooted in the historical reality of Byzantine life, there exists in the E [the Escorial MS of *DA*] a series of terms used to describe specific articles of clothing and armament, and also a unique vocabulary devised to describe the movements of the hero / warrior while in the battlefield.

“*DA* is overall an interesting text, not only because of the literary links it establishes with a long lost Greek connection with distant eastern territories under Islamic rule, or its rare linguistic character (it remains the oldest known literary example that marks the decline and overcoming of archaic language in our [Greek] history, but also because of its historical value and literary quality, as distant as they both may seem to the contemporary reader.”

<sup>32</sup> Although the actual remains of Byzantine gardens are scant, contemporary scholarship on the Byzantine garden has flourished in the past few years. For a survey of the bibliography, see A. Littlewood, “The Scholarship of Byzantine Gardens,” in *Byzantine Garden Culture*, ed. A. Littlewood, H. Maguire, and J. Wolschke-Bulmahn (Washington, D.C., 2001). On the gardens of Constantinople, see A. R. Littlewood “Gardens of the Palaces,” in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. H. Maguire (Washington D.C., 1997), 13 – 38; N. P. Sevchenko, “Wild Animals in the Byzantine Park,” in Littlewood, Maguire, and Wolschke-Bulmahn, *Byzantine Garden Culture*.

furnishings of the palace [of Theophilos], such as the mechanical toys as well as the extravagant gardens” (9), and Charles Barber, who undertook an archaeological study of Byzantine gardens in an attempt to piece together the literary testimonies of such locations and prove their existence, reveals important archaeological and historical evidence regarding the function and aesthetics of actual Byzantine gardens.

Barber describes the “καστρον” (castle or palace) of the Emperor Theophilos which was “built for him on the Asiatic shoreline of the Sea of Marmara” (2) and traces Arabic influences on the building’s decorations, including an Arab architect, from historical sources.

The chronicles make clear that the palace was based upon the models of Saracen, as the Arabs were known, palaces. The importance of this influence for the garden-historian lies in the fact that the chroniclers specifically mention the gardens of the palace. The texts seem to indicate that Theophilos’ palace and its gardens are based on Arab designs. That there might have been influence upon Byzantine tastes at this time is not improbable. In the fields of textiles, silverware, architecture and automata it can be argued that Byzantium and the Caliphate shared a similar nostalgic taste for Sassanian styles of design. (3).<sup>33</sup>

Barber also examined the scant remains of public and private gardens within the walls of Constantinople, inspired by detailed descriptions of palace and

---

<sup>33</sup> In the first half of the 800s the “Caliphate” refers to the territory of the Abbasids, which then reached from western Egypt up to the Caucasus (along the Caspian Sea), south along the northeast coast of the Arabian peninsula, and east to Iran. This combines Egyptians, ethnic Arabian, Syrians, Iraqis, and Persians, as well as smaller ethnic groups in the Caspian area. The architect’s model here is probably a reference to Baghdad, a new city founded by the Abbasids in 763.

garden-designs that have survived in Byzantine chronicles. The results of his study reveal that literary descriptions of enclosed gardens bear significant similarities with both archaeological and literary evidence; notably, he observes that Byzantine gardens contained buildings and magnificent structures of marble, mosaics, and greatly decorated surfaces with automata, and reveals that the opposition of art and nature was a popular device for representations of gardens: “these gardens could almost be said to be designed for the housing of art objects, and it is these objects that predominate when the text turns to description of the garden. The garden also plays a crucial role as the theatre for the erotic encounters within the stories” (6). Fountains, sculptures, paintings, and beautiful buildings, richly decorated and appropriately presented within the garden, seem to be new elements that characterize the revival of the Greek romance in the Byzantine times.

Barber’s observations stand in remarkable agreement with the fictional gardens in the Komnenian and Palaiologan romances. With the exception of Longus’ *Daphis and Chloe*, the narration of which focuses exclusively on pastoral themes and settings, no fictional work from the Hellenistic period includes ekphrases that indicate an aesthetic appreciation of the garden and its architecture at that early time, or offer an earlier expression of the aesthetics of gardens that is then expanded in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century romances. Byzantine romance writers’ most original contribution in the development of utopian literature, thus, is their artful use of the visual arts—they successfully integrate rhetorical style and lengthy descriptions into their stories to bring them to life.

Unlike the untamed and unattended arbors that feature in the Greek novelistic romances, the Byzantine garden is placed within a larger structure, that of the walled castle, and it is marked by allegorical references to the Byzantine court centered on Constantinople *and* a heavenly court. “Members of the earthly court, the living as well as the dead, entered the heavenly court, while members of the heavenly court entered the earthly realm and took up roles there. This looking glass world existed in the Byzantines’ imaginations, [and] were made concrete by their art” (Maguire 248).<sup>34</sup> The structure, design, and decorations that grace the fictional garden occupy lengthy ekphrases in the romances, which in turn provide a literary testimony for the growing Frankish tastes adopted by the Byzantine court in the 12<sup>th</sup> through the 15<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In Book five of *KC*, for example, the hero, Kallimachos, upon having defeated the Ogre (Δρακων), who is both the captor of the heroine, Chrysorrhoe, and the master of the castle which he soon enters, comes across a most delightful garden which he eventually traverses in his attempt to rescue the heroine. The ekphrasis of the enclosed garden (κηπος κεκλεισμενος) that follows is characteristically long (274-354)<sup>35</sup> and contains vocabulary with a good deal of wordplay with frequent sexual innuendo, as Kallimachos’ first impression of the wondrous garden testifies:

(Εκφρασις πανεξαιρετος του κηπου και του καστρου,  
τον ειδεν ο Καλλιμαχος οταν εισηλθεν μεσα.)

---

<sup>34</sup> From “The Heavenly Court,” in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 – 1204*, ed. Henry Maguire.

<sup>35</sup> The description of the castle’s garden is done in a succession by alternating sections of narrative and description while integrating authorial interjection. The results of such bold literary attempt are impressive, as Panagiotis Agapitos notes: “The *ekphrasis* is no longer a static device, but has nicely integrated in the narrative flow, which the author controls in a movement from outside to inside” (264).

[ . . . ] Και βλεπει τα παραδοξα, τα παρα φυσιν ολα,  
 τας ηδονας, τας χαριτας, τας καλλονας, τας τερψης.  
 Απαντα τινος λογισμος και νους εξαριθμησει  
 και τινος γλωσσα δυνηθη λαλησαι κατα μερος ;  
 Ευθυς γαρ ως εξ απαρχης παραδεισος ευρεθει  
 καρπους και οπωρας, χαριτας, ανθη και φυλλα γεμων,  
 απο πνοης την ηδονην υπερ τον λογον εχων,  
 εκ δε της οψεως αυτης μειζονα παλιν χαριν.  
 Μονον ουκ ειχεν κηπουρον ο τηλικουτος κηπος  
 και το πολυ της ηδονης ελαττωμενον ειχε  
 εκ το μη φαινεσθαι τινα παρα του κηπου τοτε.  
 Αλλ' ινα τι πολυλογω τα περισσα του κηπου;  
 Τι τας τοσαυτας χαριτας κατα λεπτον μη γραψαι; (274–290).<sup>36</sup>

Within the garden, Kallimachos discovers an elaborately decorated bath surrounded by mirrors, upon which the flora of the garden is reflected, bringing nature even closer to bathing and sensual pleasure.<sup>37</sup> The bath's gilded ceiling and marble wall-designs attract the attention of the poet who can't help but admire the craftsmanship of the idyllic place: "Θαυμαζω χειρας τεχνιτων και του χρυσου τη φυση. / Πως ο χρυσος ως αμπελος τη σμιλα συνεπλακη / και ταις χερσι των

<sup>36</sup> "He planted his lance, resolutely sprang up, and jumped over the wall. He fell directly inside the castle's courtyard. He saw strange objects of charm, beauty, delight, and the supernatural. What mind, what intelligence will count them all (280)? What tongue will be able to describe them in detail? The very first thing was a lovely garden laden with crops of fruit, with charms, with flowers, and leaves. Its fragrance gave a pleasure beyond words, but its appearance provided an even greater delight. However, this large garden had no gardener and much of its charm was impaired from the absence of a human being. But why waste words on its unusual nature and its many charms? Rather, I should describe it in detail" (Betts 42).

<sup>37</sup> Public baths in Constantinople were quite elaborate and very much part of the social life of the City. South of the Senate House, which stood east of the main square in the heart of Constantinople, were the renovated Baths of Zeuxippos, which served multiple social and even aesthetic purposes: "like all monumental Roman baths, they were more than simple facilities for public hygiene; they served as an entertainment, cultural, and social center, so that their location on this great public plaza is in every way appropriate. The Baths of Zeuxippos were endowed with a remarkable collection of ancient sculpture, brought to Constantinople from all over the empire" (Safran 19-20).

τεχνιτων υπεδουλωθη τοσον” (320-22).<sup>38</sup>

In Book nine of the same romance, the protagonists meet again at a yet another bath which is situated in the garden of the castle (768-70). Eros and his mother, Aphrodite, are also present, as are the Graces--Χαριτες--who help Chysorrhoe bathe (787-89). The poet concludes this section of the poem with a touch of the marvelous (792-96): “the bath is invested with magical powers as it transforms Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe and makes them more beautiful than they were before” (Agapitos 267), redeeming the earlier, more negative bath area, with textual lures.<sup>39</sup>

Only the tongue of Aphrodite could describe the pleasure and charm of the bathing. A mortal hand and pen will not suffice to tell and describe them all; how Kallimachos caressed the maiden’s wounds and from touching her bruises he received an inexpressive freshness and from her kisses a dewy sweetness. [. . .] The Graces gave their services and joined the lady there in her bath. All were astounded at her beauty. What person, what tongue shall describe her grace? [. . .] The water of the pool seemed to be all gold, but what was this compared with the beauty of the golden pavement! The couch stood there but many were its colors when its beauty was enhanced by the lady’s body. (Betts 52-53).

---

<sup>38</sup> “I marvel at the hands of the artists and the nature of the gold (320) which had been made by the chisel to resemble a twisted vine and had become the complete slave of the artist’s hands” (Betts 43).

<sup>39</sup> Panagiotis Agapitos notes a connection between the presence of Aphrodite in the bath and the depiction of the goddess and Ares playing flirtatiously with each other in a fresco on the ceiling in the Giant’s room (lines 432-35): “This, in my opinion, is a pre-figuration on the mythological level of what happens in reality (Ares – Aphrodite = Kallimachos – Chrysorrhoe)” (266).

The detailed description of the bathhouse is followed by a description of the wooden gates that surround it, the material of which has been imported from India and other unspecified Asian countries. The wood's aromatic properties entice the narrator to declare that even the gates of the bathhouse exist in perfect harmony in a most pleasant garden (333-36). These sensuous delights of nature are an integral part of the romance and provide more than architectural harmony: the poet uses them in descriptive passages to heighten the audience's anticipation of the couple's union.

The pool's doors were a remarkable and imposing combination. They were made of wood with a waving grain from India and the land of the Arabs and inlaid with musk. Their charm had an effect on the heat. On the inner door, to match the pool, there hung a curtain which was made of the flowers of lilies and roses. The eye could not take in the wonder of its art. But why talk at length and describe it in detail? Simply to see the pool I shall faint; I shall fall in a swoon and breathe in its beauty. (Betts 43).

Shortly after the temporary healing of the heroine in the ekphrases just detailed, Kallimachos discovers Chrysochoroe in a pitiable condition and, as a result, the detailed description of the heroine's graces is delayed until she has recovered, in lines 803 and following:

The lady was completely alluring. She inspired love. Her charms were beyond compare, her beauty beyond description, and her graces outdid those of the Graces themselves. Her hair flowed down in rivers of lovely curls and shone on her head with a gleam which surpassed the golden rays of the sun. Her body, which was whiter than crystal, beguiled the sight with its beauty as it seemed

to blend the charm of roses with its color. Just the sight of her face alone shook your entire soul, your entire heart. Indeed, the lady seemed to be the image of Aphrodite and of every other beauty that the mind can conceive” (Betts 53).

Following the “superb description of lady Chryorroï,” (Betts 53), the narrator continues with yet another ekphrasis (much shorter this time) of an insular garden:

“Ἦτον νησιτῖν ευμορφον εἰς παραποταμῖαν. / Ὁ τοπος εἶχεν χαριτας  
 παραξενας εκεινος. / Εγεμεν ανθη κοκκινα, παντοδαπα, ποικιλα. / Ειπες εκ  
 εινην την βαφην ως το του ροδου φυλλον, / βαφην παιδος ερωτικου,  
 της Αφροδιτης αιμα” (831-35).<sup>40</sup> The poem’s audience here is led to feel much part of the setting since a sense of awe surrounds the marvelous manifestations of nature and in turn fosters the sublime moments in the romance.

The artificial exoticism and the garden’s flora become indispensable elements for the meaning of the plot and the mood in *KC*, especially toward the end. Most of the action of the last third of the romance takes place in the garden of the anonymous king who has captured Chrysorrhoe; although the garden lacks (peculiarly enough) detailed narrative treatment, it serves multiple symbolic purposes: “in no other romance is there so sustained and so manifestly sexual imagery drawn from a garden” under the spell of Aphrodite, the Muses, and the mischievous winged Eros, all of whom live there (Littlewood 113): “το περιβολιν γινεται παστας της Αφροδιτης / και των Χαριτων κατοπτρον και

---

<sup>40</sup> Bett’s prose translation is fairly faithful to the original: “Close to the bank of the river stood a beautiful little island, a place with a strange charm as it was full of every variety of red flowers and their color resembled that of a rose petal dyed from the blood of Aphrodite’s lovely foot” (53).

των Ερωτων οικος” (2158-59).<sup>41</sup>

### **The Byzantine Garden in the Komenian and Palaiologan Romances**

It has been mentioned already in the introduction of this dissertation that the Byzantine romances, much like their Hellenistic counterparts, are escapist literature, although the escape they provide is no longer one into the distant past of pagan Hellenism, but rather into the world of romantic love as it had developed in the West *and* in the East.<sup>42</sup>

Unlike early manifestations of desire in the Greek novelistic romances where love was essentially violent, involving abductions, rape, and elopement, the reappearance of love in the Byzantine romances nine centuries later takes a far

---

<sup>41</sup> “The garden became the bridal chamber of Aphrodite, the mirror of the graces, and the dwelling place of Eros” (Betts 79).

<sup>42</sup> Christianity, the new religion, had emerged as a Palestinian sect in the first century and gained popularity rapidly, especially from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the early 10<sup>th</sup> century, precisely the time that the Greek novelistic romance started to decline. Charlotte Roueche, who explores the new forms of writing that developed from the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> century, notes that “two main forms of narrative composition survived, which met the needs of a period of insecurity and reconstruction. First, history—but in the cramped form of chronography—instead on the temporal continuity of the Byzantine Empire. Secondly, Saints’ lives reinforced a series of essential values and beliefs” (123).

Many of the features of the Greek novelistic romance—particularly human passion, adventure, violence, and suspense—were preserved and cultivated in various sub-forms of hagiography—including the novel, or pseudo-biographical vitae, which flourished in the interim between the decline of the Greek novelistic romance and the first Byzantine romances.

Hellenism refers here to a language and culture in which peoples of the most diverse kind could participate. The word “Hellenism,” a genuine Greek word for Greek culture (Hellenismos--Ελληνισμος), represented language, thought, mythology, and images that constituted an extraordinarily flexible medium of both cultural and religious expression.

more refined and pacific form. Enclosed gardens<sup>43</sup> and winged cupids become hallmarks of the Byzantine revival of the genre, just like castles and forts become the dwelling places of “Eros, the King.” In the protected Byzantine garden love becomes a quest which all heroes eventually undertake, and the garden is transformed into a pastoral retreat, secure from the violence and hardships of the world.<sup>44</sup> Emphasis on the depiction of castles, structured gardens, and baths is certainly a new element in the Byzantine rebirth of the genre,<sup>45</sup> much like allegory and rhetoric, both of which assisted the process of appropriation of the Hellenistic ideology into an increasingly hierarchical and Christian Byzantine

---

<sup>43</sup> They are variously termed κηπος, λειμων, λιβαδι, ορχατος, παραδεισος, and περιβολι, but in all instances the description of the contents belongs to the same tradition. Gardens—enclosed and open, artificial and natural—fare particular attention in Hellenistic horticultural treatises, and Pliny the Elder (23-79 AD) devotes a special section on gardens in his *Natural History*, a compilation of much of the cosmographical and anthropological knowledge of his time. Pliny argues that “the cultivation of the garden is a subject recommended by its own intrinsic merits to our notice: for we find that even in remote antiquity there was nothing looked upon with a greater degree of admiration than the gardens of the Hesperides, those of King Adonis and Alcinous, and the Hanging Gardens, whether they were the work of Semiramis, or whether of Cyrus, king of Assyria. The kings of Rome cultivated their gardens with their own hands; indeed it was from his garden that Tarquinius Superbus sent to his son that cruel and sanguinary message of his. In our laws of the Twelve Tables we find the word ‘villa’, or ‘farm’, nowhere mentioned; it is the word ‘hortus’ that is always used with that signification while the term ‘heredium’ we find employed for garden” (125).

<sup>44</sup> The walled garden in the Byzantine romances is often referred to as *kastron*, fort, which is also defined as “walled town” in Kriaras’ dictionary—*Λεξικό της Μεσαιωνικής Ελληνικής Δημώδους Γραμματείας 1100–1669* (Vol 7). Ekphrases of protected gardens occur in only two of the five extant Greek novelistic romances, those of Achilles Tatius [*LC*] and of Longus [*Daph.*], but in the Byzantine romances they are a staple.

<sup>45</sup> One explanation for this new element in Byzantine romance, of course, is historical. Gavin Betts notes that castles are primarily a medieval concept, and that they “did not exist when the ancient [Hellenistic] novels were written. They were not used in the twelfth-century Greek novel, which, as we have seen, took over the ancient setting in its entirety. But by the fourteenth-century western romances had long since taken up the castle motif and associated it with chivalry and adventure, and with various forms of erotic symbolism; the most striking of these was the castle of Love himself. When this motif was taken over into a Greek context it opened up possibilities that had not existed in gardens which were the novel’s preferred meeting place for the lovers” (xxiv).

Empire.<sup>46</sup>

The decade preceding the rise of the Komnenian Dynasty (1061-1071) was marked by significant battles between Muslim Seljuk Turks and the Byzantine army, which were exceedingly devastating for Byzantium—the Seljuk Turks in time took from the Byzantines most of Asia Minor, including Armenia. Considering the devastating effect that such circumstances must have had on the Byzantines, perhaps it is not all that difficult to account for the detailed ekphrases of utopian locations that feature in the romances of the Komnenian period.<sup>47</sup>

Also, the rich descriptive details of automata, castles, clothing articles, textiles, mosaics, and other decorative devices that feature in the romances of the middle and late Byzantine periods, also allude to the effects of the First Crusade, which passed through Constantinople on the quest to capture Jerusalem (1095-1099). Aleksei Kazhdan traces the cultural influences of the First Crusade in Byzantium and the West and claims that “although they ultimately failed in the Middle East, the Crusades helped Europeans absorb Arab accomplishments, and ultimately, Islam’s influence helped propel Europe out of its cultural slump” (138). Many artistic and literary influences coming from the West as well are recorded in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century art and fiction in Constantinople. These influences were partly due to Latin expansion, which during these two centuries

---

<sup>46</sup> Suzanne MacAlister notes that the Hellenistic influence on 12<sup>th</sup> century romances is so sophisticated—thanks to truly competent Byzantine writers—and well integrated into the narrative, that Christian and allegorical references are difficult to distinguish from classical or Hellenistic ones: “analysis reveals a shaping and an inversion of the original that are sometimes so subtle that they can only be discerned through close historical and literary commentary” (309).

<sup>47</sup> The *DA* romance was written when there had been for some time a “Roman peace” on the frontiers of the Empire, and when there was prospect of the peace being maintained. Mavrogordato believes that “the *Digenes* was written during the reign of Constantine IX Monomachos (1042-1054) during which almost complete peace reigned on the frontier of Syria and Mesopotamia” (32).

succeeded in bringing the Byzantines into contact with western trade, opening in turn new doors to a new literary market. Kazhdan also notes the significant mercantile and cultural influences that affected the evolution and production of secular literature in Constantinople—he affirms that “Italian mercantile communities [were] established in Constantinople by the twelfth century, a time of prosperity if not of military strength. Byzantine literature, [as a result] became more developed and diverse than it had been since the sixth century. By the twelfth century the collection and transmission of classical culture implies Byzantine mastery of ancient heritage” (143).

The action of both the Komnenian and the Palaiologan romances takes place against a very vaguely-defined historical and geographical background in which love offers the means of salvation for the individual and a hard-won harmony with a threatening environment. In this environment, love itself is not something freely chosen by the individual, “nor is it initiated by the conscious will of the hero or heroine. Love [in both the Byzantine and the earlier Greek novelistic romances] is a cosmic force, before which individuals are powerless, and locked in perpetual conflict with the equally powerful and indiscriminate cosmic force of chance” (Beaton 57). Eros, in the form of a powerful monarch, reigns supreme in the gardens of the Byzantine romances, and artifice (also referred to in the narrative of the romances as *τεχνη* or art) evolves as a new topos in the Byzantine renaissance of the Hellenistic genre.

The stories of most of the Byzantine romances are built upon a common and limited stock of narrative incidents. Roderick Beaton, in a highly

schematized description of the Byzantine romances, observes that in each of them, a royal prince, ignorant or scornful of Eros, sets out from his home.

In a fabulous castle he first sees a princess with whom he is fated to fall in love. About half-way through the series of their adventures their love is consummated, but a setback follows. In some of the romances the setback proves fatal and a happy ending is thwarted. In others, hero and heroine are separated for a time, one or both is believed dead, but the pair are reunited after hair-raising adventures with the aid of a woman helper. (109).

In *Belthandros and Chrysantza*, the garden's natural beauty nurtures the couple's desires and dreams, providing them with an escape into a safe, pseudo-exotic environment. The romance begins with a quarrel between the hero, a prince of the "Romans" (i.e., Byzantines), and his father, King Rodophilos, which prompts the departure of Belthandros despite the entreaties of his elder brother, Filarmos. After leading his small retinue of followers safely through the country of Anatolia (in Asia Minor), the hero arrives at the southern coast near Tarsus, which the anonymous poet, with historical correctness, places in the medieval kingdom of "Lesser Armenia." There, he soon comes upon a stream which contains a band of fire within its current and which he follows until he arrives at the "Ερωτοκαστρον," or Castle of Eros. In the proportionally designed garden of the castle, the hero comes across many hints that foreshadow his attraction for the heroine, such as that of what is described as a "female tree" which the hero climbs: "Ανωθεν βλεμμα ερριψεν ως προς τα δενδρη ταχα / και δενδρων ειδε καλλονην και ισοτηταν ευμορφην / και την κορμοαναβασιν

ευκολοτατην πανυ, / οτι να ειπες εκ παντος οτι ρουκανοτεκνων /  
 ερρουκανοετουρνευσεν, σταθμισας επηξεν τα. / Και του ανθοφυλλου ο  
 πλασμος πολλα ωραιωμενος. / Ειδε, παραξενωθην τα, υπερ-εθαυμασεν  
 τα” (286-89).<sup>48</sup>

Upon entering the castle, the interior of which is laden with prophesies of the protagonists trials, Belthandros finds statues, automata, and rooms richly painted and decorated—this is the castle of “Ερωσ βασιλευς,” Eros the King. On its walls, the hero notices two bands of reliefs: the lower depicts men and women tortured by cupids, whereas the upper displays a group of people in a state of happiness. The statues are labeled with their names and some historical details of their lives. Among them, in the ornate banqueting hall, are two that prove the sources of the mysterious river outside, and beneath them are inscriptions prophesying that Belthandros will fall in love with Chrysantza, daughter of the king of Antioch.

Shortly after the hero discovers the prophetic statues, he is summoned into the presence of the lord of the castle, none other than Eros, who announces a beauty contest for the next day, at which Belthandros must give a wand to the most beautiful among forty princesses. The wand is indeed given to the most beautiful and Belthandros turns to Eros to sing the praises of the winter’s beauty and graces; at the end of this recital, however, the princesses and Eros vanish

---

<sup>48</sup> “He threw a glance up at them and saw their beauty, their pleasing symmetry and the graceful rise of their trunks. You should certainly have said that a carpenter had turned them smooth on a lathe, set them upright and planted them” (Betts 10).

abruptly like a dream and the hero decides to set out for Antioch in search of Chrysantza.

Detained by the intervention of Chance (Τύχη) and King Eros (Ερως βασιλευς), hero and heroine do not unite until the last quarter of the romance (832-1044); since “Belthandros saw Chrysantza only by magic in the Castle of Eros, he has to find her again in her father’s castle at Antioch” (Littlewood 113), and two whole years pass before, overhearing the heroine’s sighs of longing in Chrysantza’s walled garden, the hero jumps the wall, the couple exchanges their first kisses, and they spend their first night together: “Ως γουν εστραφισαν οι δυο και ειδοσαν αλληλους, / σ’ αναισθησια επεσον αμφοτερα τα μερη / και εκειντο τα σωματα μισοαποθαμενα / και διεβη ωρα περισση τον νου των να συμφερουν” (848-51).<sup>49</sup>

Unlike early ekphrases of gardens (in the Greek novelistic romances) that had often been stigmatized as intrusive and disruptive, Byzantine *loci amoeni* no longer appear as asyndetic units that interrupt the narrative flow. On the contrary, Byzantine ekphrases of enchanted castles and enclosed idylls are better integrated into the narrative of these later romances, providing the primary setting where the amorous dreams of the protagonists stand a chance to materialize under the watchful eye of Eros.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> “When the two turned and saw each other, both fell in a faint and their bodies lay there half-dead. It was some time before that they recovered” (Betts 20).

<sup>50</sup> The most frequently described items in the Greek novelistic and vernacular Byzantine romances are the heroine, the exterior of a castle, a garden, and often the grounds of the castle that has an interior with painted rooms, statues, and even bathhouses. The subject, in other words, can be anything that arouses the author’s admiration and enthusiasm. The scope of ekphrasis in the vernacular romances of *BC*, *KC*, and *TA*, is more restricted than in the earlier romances of *ET*, *Daph.*, and *AR*, but in length and rhetorical

In *Libistros and Rhodamne*, the hero, a Frankish prince of an unspecified “Latin” country called Libadros, is initially instructed on the nature of love’s fearsome power after an incident while hunting in Eros’ lush grove. Klitobos, Libistros’s kinsman who dutifully follows his master in his adventurous quests, instructs the scornful hero on Love’s powers, emphasizing Eros’ reign over animate and inanimate creation, including rivers, mountains, reptiles, and plants, cautioning his master against hubris and scorn:

Consider the palm tree and marvel. If a female palm has no male, it drops no fruit to the ground but stands in constant grief. Next, marvel at the lodestone. Because of its passion, it attracts iron. Take also the moray eel. Its passion makes it rise up from the sea floor and unite in love with a serpent. Wonder too at how the river called Alpheios runs through so much of the sea to get to the harbor in Sicily. (Betts 98).

No sooner does Klitobos conclude his tribute to Love, that Eros reveals his powers to the hero the same night: in an overwhelming dream the hero envisions himself ambushed by armed, winged Ερωτες (cupids), as he stands by a flowery meadow (II, 246 – 294); the cupids, in turn, lead him before the throne of Eros, the ruler of a palace peopled by allegorical figures:

There was a low terrace built of marble and round it stood slender, hewn columns. On the front of each were fair sculptures of cupids which seemed to be alive. Little creatures were sitting about on their chests and all drinking water from the cupids’ mouths. Beside the terrace was a pool which was filled with the freshest

---

elaboration the ekphrasis of the vernacular romances is frequently spectacular; the technique for such detailed descriptions had been refined since Hellenistic times and became a stock-in-trade for Byzantine writers.

water, cold as ice. In it stood a column and on its top was a marble basin. Inside the basin I saw a man—he seemed to be alive and to move. In front of his chest his hands held a sign with verses that said: ‘Let him who sees me grieve. Let him who looks at me to suffer. Let him whose eyes turn to me feel sorrow. The sentence which I expiate with my sufferings was imposed upon me by Love, who condemned me because I neither knew nor feared him.’  
(Betts 103).

In the walled structure, Libistros seeks the king’s forgiveness for the insensitivity and scorn he had exhibited in the past toward love, and the god in return accepts his submission and declares that the hero is fated to serve love and marry Rhodamne, daughter of King Chrysos (Golden), of *Αργυροκαστρον*, (Castle of Silver). In due course, the hero, just like Belthandros in *BC* and Digenes in *DA*, sets off in search of love, which he finds once he reaches the famed castle. Libistros relishes the beauty of the castle’s structure and interior decoration, concluding his monologue with a tribute to the graces of the heroine, whom he discerns behind the ramparts.

He reveals that the castle is triangular and the walls surmounted by a series of allegorical statues representing the twelve months of the year, the attributes of love, and the virtues—there are twelve of each:

Rodamni’s castle, my friend, had three sides and on each were twelve towers. On all the battlements, stood men of brass and stone. The artist had represented them in arms. If you had seen them, my friend, I think you would certainly have said that they were alive and were standing in line for battle. The artist had fashioned others as well. One was playing a *mousiki*, another a

lyre. A third was playing a flute skillfully and with feeling and you heard every note of each reed sound with the breath of the wind as it came from the artists' invention. [. . .] Carved on the left side near the gate I saw the Twelve Virtues. Each held a sign in her hand; all contained writing and one was displayed in front of each female figure. (Betts 114-15).

Unlike the Greek novelistic romances in which love is presented as essentially violent, involving abductions, rape and elopement, the reappearance of love in the Byzantine romances nine centuries later takes a far more refined and noble form; in the Byzantine revival of Greek prose fiction, the personification of love either as a king of a castle or as a winged cupid in the service of Eros is a new *topos*.<sup>51</sup> The power of the winged demigod affects the human affairs within the garden, and the adventures of the protagonists are as the perils of the Hellenistic heroes under the sway of Chance.

In the paradisiacal environment of the Byzantine castle and its garden, the hero enters the realm of the unconscious, a never-never-land in which his most absurd dreams have a chance to materialize.<sup>52</sup> Once within the confines of the castle, the hero, under the spell of Eros, is conquered by love and trained in its arts. "I dreamed [while in the garden] that I was alone and that I was going through a meadow" (Betts 99), Libistros recalls, prior to recounting the striking encounter with Eros in the latter's terrain: "[it was] a most beautiful meadow with

---

<sup>51</sup> The power of love in a personified form appears only once in the Greek novelistic romances, namely, in Longus' *DC*.

<sup>52</sup> Paganism and Christianity could not have left a finer joint imprint than the one witnessed in the description of the Byzantine garden in the romances of the Komnenian and Palaiologan periods. In these romances the garden functions as the center of the protagonists' world and the world of the reader.

countless flowers. Fresh, cool water gushed forth among thousands of trees. If you had seen it, you would have said that the place with all its beauties and colors had been created by the hands of an artist. [. . .] My mind was entranced by the flowers. The place intoxicated me” (99).

The depiction of Eros in his domain is probably the most significant western contribution to the development of the Byzantine romance. Love as a conquering force undergoes significant transformation from its appearance in the Greek novelistic romances to its appropriated reappearance in the Byzantine romances of the 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries. The impersonation of love as king seated on a throne surrounded by vassals is foreign to the classical heritage of love. The regal depiction of Eros in the 14<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine romances has come a long way from the depiction of the same figure as a cherub or a faceless and violent force in the Greek novelistic romances. Roderick Beaton believes this change reflects the “way in which western precedents are taken over by the Greek writers of romance, that this representation of Eros the King (Ερως Βασιλευς) does not represent such a sudden and radical break with earlier Greek tradition as [Caroline] Cupane proposes” (156).

In the Greek novelistic romances love is presented within a social and cultural context. Eros, in the form of a little innocent cupid-like boy, and rhetoric, in the form of didactic ekphrases, are presented in an amusing coexistence, the purpose of which is to instruct protagonists and readers alike in love. Anderson, in *Ancient Fiction: The Novel in the Graeco-Roman World*, illustrates the instructive nature of love in a scene recovered from a lost Greek novel.

The scene presents the hero at a banquet, talking about love in the presence of both his beloved and a Presocratic philosopher. Anxious, no doubt, to show off to the latter, he rejects the conventional presentation of Love as a little boy with a bow-and-arrow, and defines it instead as a *κεινημα διανοοιας υπο [κ]αλλους γινομε[νον] και υπο συνηθειας αυξομενον* ('an intellectual impulse activated by beauty and aggravated by association'). In his anxiety to be academically detached, he has just said that he has little experience of this passion, an assertion that arouses the heroine's just indignation. (43).

Similarly, the first quarter of Achilles Tatius's *Leucippe and Clitophon* contains a high concentration on rhetorical set-pieces which focus on the effect of love; here, the characters deliver lectures rather than speeches about the nature of true love as it affects animate and inanimate creation.<sup>53</sup>

The most detailed descriptions of the impressive realm of Eros the King and the god himself are in *LR* in the poet's descriptions of the castle of Silver (*Αργυροκαστρον*), where the heroine is kept captive. The construction of the castle is presented in descriptive prose: it is a triangular structure and each of its walls supports twelve towers, which in turn are surmounted with statues and allegorical figures. In one of his love-letters, Libistros compares the male lover's heart to a castle.

---

<sup>53</sup> See Achilles I. viii. 1-9 (Clinias against marriage and women); I. ix. 2-x. 7 (Clinias' *ars amatoria*); I. xviii.5 (Clitophon on erotica in nature); II. xiv. 2 – 10 (Sostratus and Chaerephon on the oracle about Tyre); II. xx. 3-xxii.7 (sophisticated fable contest between Conops and Satyrus); II.xxxviii (Menelaus and Clitophon on homosexual versus heterosexual love).

παρ' ου οτι αιχμαλωτιζομαι δια ποθον εδικον σου  
 παρου το καστρον της εμης προδιδεται καρδιας  
 απο τον δημιον ερωταν, ωραια, τον εδικον σου [. . .]  
 το καστρον της καρδιας μου μονη να το υποταξης,  
 και αυθεντικα να το διαβης το πυργο της ψυχης μου.  
 (285-87 and 295-96).<sup>54</sup>

In lines 293-304 of the same romance, the poet gives shape to a figure that bears no similarities with the traditional winged archer of antiquity. Instead, Libistros meets King Eros three times—once in each of the three dreams that he has—and each time the figure of Eros appears more remarkable and terrifying, wearing three different faces—one for each age—than the previous:

Ερωσ τριμορφοπροσωπος καθεται εις τον θρονον,  
 το πρωτον του το προσωπον ωσπερ μικρου παιδιου,  
 απαλοσαρκου, φοβερου, και ειχεν ξανθην την πλασιν,  
 του να τον ειδες, εκ παντος χερια καλου ζωγραφου  
 τεχνιτου τον εστορησαν, ψεγος ουδεν βασταζει  
 το δευτερον εφαινετον ως μεσης ηλικιας,  
 να εχη το γενιν στρογγυλον, την οψιν ως το χιονι  
 και το απο εκεινου προσωπον γεροντος ειδες οψιν,  
 συνθεσιν, σχημα και κοπην και πλασιν αναλογως  
 και το μεν πρωτον προσωπον ειχεν εξ ολοκληρου  
 τα χερια, τα ποδαρια και το αλλον του το σωμα,  
 το δε απο εκεινου προσωπον μονον απο τους ωμους.<sup>55</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> Beaton translates, “but I am held prisoner by desire for you, / but the castle of my heart is betrayed / by the love of you, my beauty, that slays [. . .] / May you alone subdue the castle of my heart / and set foot as lord and master in the tower of my soul” (161).

Never before in Greek literature has Eros been described in such realistic detail.<sup>56</sup> His anthropomorphic characteristics are striking and most certainly alien to the Greek tradition of love. Similarly, in Book II of *Hysmine and Hysminias*, the hero and his friend Kratisthenes visit the garden of Hysminias' host, Sosthenes, who is also the heroine's father, and the two are awe-struck by a summer-house, the frieze of which depicts in the central scene a winged and naked youth armed with bow, arrow and a torch, seated on a chariot and followed by throngs of people: "Ὀρωσ γυμνος, οπλοφορος, πυροφορος, τοξοτης, πτερωτος. / Οπλα φερει κατ' ανδρων, πυρ κατα γυναικων, τοξα κατα / θηρων, κατα πτηνων το πτερον, την γυμνωσιν κατα των εν / θαλασσην και καθ' ολης αυτης ημερα και νυξ, ως ορας, / δουλευει τω Ερωτι" (II. 11).<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>55</sup> "Eros triple-form-faced sits upon the throne, / his first face like that of a small child, / tender-fleshed, terrible, and blonde of aspect, / to see it, [it was] quite [as though] the hands of a fine painter / [and] craftsman had painted it, it bears no blemish; / the second appeared as though in middle age, / with rounded beard, the complexion like snow; / next you could see an old man's face, in composition, form, and profile, aspect, all in proportion; / and while the first face had in its entirety the hands, the legs and the rest of the body, / the other face [was] only from the shoulders [upwards]" (Beaton 157).

<sup>56</sup> Barch claims that this realism in literature and the upheaval of ekphrastic descriptions stemmed from the sister art of painting in Byzantium, which strove to reproduce reality through allegorical means that Christian orthodoxy accepted. "The literature [of this period] saw that the painter's art could reproduce reality accurately and aptly; since it desired this itself, it developed the feeling that it had to compete with the other art. And it became customary to see reality with the eye of the graphic artist and even to regard reality as an artwork to be portrayed through the painter's art" (166 – 67).

Also, for more information on the relation of ekphrasis to art and the study of Byzantine ekphrasis in the context of ancient and medieval rhetoric, see Robert S. Nelson's article, "To Say and to See: Ekphrasis and vision in Byzantium," published in the collection, *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance*, 2002.

<sup>57</sup> "Eros, naked, bearing fire, arrows, and wings / [also] bears arms to conquer men, fire to conquer women, arrows to defeat / the beasts, and wings to conquer the birds/ working diligently for as long as he can see [by daylight] throughout day and night."

The figure of Eros, so eloquently presented in the ekphrasis of Book II in *HH*, makes its appearance again in Hysminias' dream and prophesizes to him his destiny with the heroine, Hysmine, (in Book III, lines 1-2); the same figure appears again in Book IV, as a central character in an ekphrasis of a painting. Here, Eros becomes a symbol of universal power assuming the guise of a mighty Βασιλευς (king), and, in a most vivid dream, enrolls Hysminias as a slave in his service:

Και μεσον το περι το του κηπου / θριγγιον μειρακιον,  
τον γεγραμμενον Ερωτα, τον βασιλεα, / τον φοβερων  
εκεινον, επι του χρυσου και παλιν / διφρου καθημενον.  
Ως εκ βροντης δε μοι κατερραγη / φωνη. 'Προς ημας τον  
δυναστην, τον ελευθερον, τον μη / φρισσοντα μου το  
βελος, το μην φοβουμενον το πτερον, / τον λοιδορουντα το  
πυρ, τον αισχυνομενον μου την / γυμνωσιν, τον ως  
μειρακιου καταμωκωμενον, τον ασπαζομενον / τον  
ζωγραφον, ει το ροδον βδελυσσοιτο, τον την / εμην φιλην  
Υσμινην αισχυναντα, ον ως σωφρονα φιλουσι θεοι"  
(III. 1-3).<sup>58</sup>

Roderick Beaton and Caroline Cupane agree on the effect and role Eros plays in the later Byzantine romances, both dismissing the idea of Eros as “merely a three-in-one figure with parodic overtones of the Trinity” (158), arguing instead that the Byzantine construct of Eros “combines the dual aspect of himself already traditional in Greek, with a third, that of the grown youth, which by the time of *Libistros* has considerable currency in the West. In the process, the nameless

---

<sup>58</sup> “And in the midst of the garden, an adolescent youth was depicted in an entablature, seated on a golden chariot, and [identified] by an inscription as King Eros, the terrible. Like thunder, a voice came down. ‘He who is unafraid of the liberated master, [the master] who causes arrows to shake, who is unafraid of flying, detests fire, and is unashamed of nakedness, exhibits scorn for the adolescent youth and refuses to embrace the artist or is scornful of the rose [Hysmine], [and thus] will be unable to kiss Hysmine as long as he doesn’t embrace the wise god.’”

author has ingeniously incorporated into the iconography of Eros the lesson on time learnt by Hysminias. In this romance, Eros himself encapsulates the three ‘ages of man’: infancy, maturity, and old age. It is no wonder that Klitobos in the story is so bewildered” (Beaton 158).

The garden as a retreat from social hardships appears again in the Byzantine proto-romance of *Digenes Akrites*.<sup>59</sup> Here, however, it does not prove as idyllic as in the other romances. In the last third of the poem (Book VI in the Grottaferrata MS),<sup>60</sup> in an effort to expiate his sins of murder and adultery, the hero performs a number of feats in order to protect his wife at a lonely oasis, a landscape that features unusual challenges. Digenes saves his wife from wild beasts and bandits repeatedly,<sup>61</sup> and once he has established a heroic name for himself both in the East and West he has little left to accomplish but to build a

---

<sup>59</sup> The romance is named after its hero, Digenes Akrites. The “two-blood border lord” (his father was a Syrian Emir who eloped his Christian bride), was a legendary hero in the Byzantine Empire. Throughout the poem he comes across as a representative of mankind’s struggles with chaos, death, and is finally defeated by a trick. I am basing my analysis of the poem on two manuscripts: The Grottaferrata (shortly known as G and believed to be closer to the original composition) kept in a monastery near Rome, and the Escorial (or E version for short) preserved in the Escorial Library.

<sup>60</sup> The poem of Digenes Akrites, as it appears in the 14<sup>th</sup> century Grottaferrata MS, is the earliest we possess. John Mavrogordato’s 1956 translation of the poem remains the most illuminating, accurate and complete edition of the Byzantine romance.

<sup>61</sup> “I drew my sword, and I was in the spring, / For my feet ran dazzlingly like wings; / And when I reached him he showed me an appearance / Horrible, dreadful among men, and great, / Three well-grown heads he had all fiery-flaming, / From each of them a flashing flame sent out; / Moving from his place he made a noise of thunder, / So the earth seemed to shake and all the trees. / His body thick, joining the heads in one, / Behind was slender, tapering to a tail, / Now he gathered himself up, and then stretched out, / And right against me all his onset made. / But I counting as nothing was seen / On high with all my spirit raised my sword, / Down brought it on the dreadful beast his heads, / Took all together; on the ground stretched out / He lashed his tail up and down on the last time. / I wiped my sword and put it in its sheath, / Called up my servants who were some way off / And bade them straightway take the serpent up” (VI. 61-80). One of Mavrogordato’s objectives in his edition of *DA* is to provide a most literal translation of the original poem; evidently, the language of the English translation reflects the idiomatic and archaic elements of the Byzantine verses romance.

palace with an impressive garden at the banks of the Euphrates.<sup>62</sup>

The hero claims to have found the most beautiful place on earth despite some minor geographical “inconveniences” which he promptly resolves:<sup>63</sup>

“κ’ εφαινετο η τοποθεσια πανωραια ως παραδεισιν. / Και εποιησεν τοπον παντερπνον και ωραιον παραδεισιν / και εποιησεν περιχωρον” (1626-

29).<sup>64</sup> In lines 1606-94, Digenes’ sumptuous abode is described, located in a grassy and fertile land by the banks of the river. The Byzantine borderer tampers with nature to alter the natural environment of his territory to his liking, and suffers no divine consequences—he manages to divert the water of the river around the land that he finds fit for his castle, and, in order to prevent floods, he channels the water into four different wells that surround the garden and function as nourishment for the shady arbors. His prowess, evidently, has earned him a status fitting for such bold actions.

Although the topography of the hero’s castle is convincingly real and the structures within it realistically described, the possessions of Digenes appear in a realm that has more in common with the wondrous and imaginary than with a pragmatic reality. Tranquility, abundance, fertility, beauty—natural and

---

<sup>62</sup> Digenes’ choice to construct a lavish garden is significant, if one considers the high regard Byzantine and Roman royalty held for gardens and horticulture in general—“Byzantine emperors regarded the possession of ornate gardens as an overt symbol of their power and greatness. [. . .] The assertion of imperial might demonstrated by the complex of buildings and gardens on the palatine was imitated by native rulers in the Roman world [. . .]” (Littlewood, “Imperial Spaces” 18).

<sup>63</sup> My analysis of this version of the poem is based on Stylianos Alexiou’s edition of the Escorial manuscript (E).

<sup>64</sup> This is also, of course, a reference to descriptions of Babylon—also on the Euphrates.

artificial—and perpetual happiness are characteristics of Digenes’ territory, all alluding to an artificial terrestrial Paradise.<sup>65</sup>

The building of the hero’s garden fares particular attention in the poem—the anonymous poet devotes thirty-six lines (out of the ninety-four lines that comprise section E) to an ekphrasis that describes unusual (at least to the writer) plants the hero brought from distant parts of Egypt to grace his garden:

Και εφυτευσαν φοινικα εις αυτον το παραδεισιν  
 και εφερασιν τον βαρσαμον εκ της Αιγυπτου χωρας:  
 τα φυλλα του ειναι πρασινα και κοκκινον το ανθος  
 και η ριζα του ειναι πιθαμη και ολη και ολη ξυλαλοη  
 και ο καρπος του εν’ μοσχος και οι κλωνοι του ειναι  
 κοκκινοι και φιλωτα κλωσμενο και εξερχεται εκ την  
 ριζαν του υδωρ κ’ ειναι χιονατο, μυριζει δε ως  
 ροδοσταμον και απολιγωνει ανθρωπους”  
 (1641-47).<sup>66</sup>

Lovely balconies grace the building which is located in the middle of an impressively decorated yard that includes a meadow.<sup>67</sup> Gilded statues of unusual

---

<sup>65</sup> Henry Maguire, in “Paradise Withdrawn,” offers a remarkably similar description (with many Biblical allusions) of a terrestrial paradise found in the 12<sup>th</sup> century chronicle by Constantine Manasses. Here, “in a poetic account of the creation, Constantine describes the garden, with its beautiful orchestrated trees, its fragrant plants, its abundant fruits, its brilliantly colored flowers, its iridescent grass, its wafting breezes, and, finally, the spring, the mother whence flow the four great rivers, identified as Ganges, the Nile, the Euphrates, and the Tigris. Constantine Manasses concludes his account by switching from the past to the present tense and describing the geography of these rivers on earth” (27).

<sup>66</sup> “And in this paradise he planted a palm tree / and delivered a balsam tree from the country of Egypt: / its leaves are green and red is its blossom / and its root is about an inch, and entirely of harsh wood / and its fruit fragrant / and its branches red, covered with foliage / and from its roots springs water as pure as snow / and as fragrant as rose-water that makes people faint.” Since there is no English translation of the Escorial MS of *DA*, I have provided a personal one.

<sup>67</sup> The pond or the fountain, a predominant feature of the Byzantine garden, often features in detailed ekphrases, such as those in *DC*, *HH*, and *DA*.

animals from whose mouths springs aromatic water, and live exotic birds in cages imported from Egypt decorate the branches of the trees. The most idyllic part of this landscape, however, is the parrots that greet the royal couple, wishing the Byzantine borderer and his wife happiness and prosperity: “Και εκρεμων χρυσοκλωβα εις του δεντρου τους κλωνους / κ’ εχουν ωραιους ψιττακους και κιλαδουν και λεγουν: / Χαιρου, Ακριτη, χαιρου μετα της ποθητης σου” (1657–59).<sup>68</sup>

Shortly after the description of the wondrous birds and the bridge that the hero builds over Euphrates, the narrative-focus shifts to Digenes’ abode:<sup>69</sup> near the meadow in the garden, the hero also places a bed, the exquisiteness of which is presented in yet another ekphrasis (lines 1678–89). Gilded and bejeweled, the bed is covered with a precious silk bedspread woven in the East; its sides are crystal, and its legs are adorned with pearls.

The exquisite garden and palace of Digenes attract attention in both the Escorial and the Grottaferatta MSS.<sup>70</sup> In the Grottaferatta MS, 104 lines (3310–3413) and a whole book are devoted to the description of the hero’s charmed territory. Here, the ekphrasis of Digenes’ garden and castle is additionally laden with references to Biblical and classical scenes, all of which blend in a descriptive

---

<sup>68</sup> “And from the tree’s branches were hanging gilded cages / containing fine parrots that declared while singing: / hail, Akrites, greetings of happiness to you and your beloved.”

<sup>69</sup> Gavin Bett’s analysis of decorative automata similar to those gracing the gardens of *DA*, *BC*, and *LR*, points to a link between Byzantine court culture and romantic literature: “the artificial birds which sing on the branches of equally artificial plants in *Belthandros* and *Libistros* seem to be a recollection of similar automata on a tree made of precious metals with mechanical birds which was a feature of the Byzantine court of the tenth century” (xxv).

<sup>70</sup> John Mavrogordato has produced an excellent critical edition of the poem along with a translation of the Grottaferatta manuscript into modern English, which I am using in this chapter as reference.

amalgam. The ekphrasis of the garden is to some extent a duplicate of the description of the garden in May at the beginning of Book VII. Built near the banks of Euphrates (which, according to the poet, had its “source from that Paradise” (3317) the palace of Digenes is surrounded by a fertile and nourishing grove, the vegetation of which is protected by tall walls:

Round the grove was a wall in height sufficient,  
 And having its four sides of polished marble.  
 Within the long-haired plants held festival,  
 Branches bloomed gladly falling on each other,  
 Such was the emulation of the trees.  
 On either side were hanging lovely vines,  
 Reeds growing there were lifted up on high,  
 The fruits hung down, and flowers one on another,  
 The meadow brightly bloomed beneath the trees,  
 Its hue was dappled, and it flashed with flowers,  
 Sweet-smelling daffodils, roses, and myrtles;  
 Roses were earth’s purple-dyed ornament,  
 Daffodils gleamed in turn a milky hue,  
 The twinkling violets had a hue of the sea,  
 When it is calm stirred by a gentle breeze. (VII. 3323-37).

The hero’s luminous palace is also described in similar detail: “Of goodly size, four-square of ashlar’d stone, / With stately columns over the casements; / The ceilings with mosaic he all adorned, / Of precious marbles flashing with their gleam; / The pavement he made bright inlaid with pebbles; / Within he made three-vaulted upper chambers, / Of goodly height, the vaults all variegated, / And chambers cruciform, and strange pavilions, / With shining marbles throwing

gleams of light” (3352-60). The ceilings of the castle are decorated with Biblical figures, such as those of Sampson fighting against the Philistines, and the strife of David with Goliath (3371-92), next to which are depicted the fabled wars of Achilles, and “Agamemnon the fair, the baleful flight, / Penelope the wise, the suitors slain, / Odysseus’ wondrous daring of the Kyklops;” (3394-3402). Other biblical scenes and figures such as those of saints, Moses, and Joshua, decorate other surfaces of the gold-plated ceiling, the effect of which is unmistakably striking and illuminating.<sup>71</sup>

Evidently, the Byzantines drew a subtle and profound analogy between the imperial court and its grounds (which included several gardens) and the court of heaven, consistently enriching their conception of each one with their perception of the other. Historical sources reveal that the legendary walls of Constantinople enclosed such a vast area that dense urban development never reached as far as the land walls. The open space inside walls of the urban area was put to good use and spacious gardens were parts of this new, carefully planned landscape. Although there is very little evidence and information regarding the arrangement of plants and even the architectural aesthetics of these gardens, Froma Zeitlin contends that they manifested divine characteristics and Christian significance: “the paradisiacal gardens, raised higher than the surrounding terrain, formally arranged in symmetrical patterns according to the patterns of Eastern royalty, with

---

<sup>71</sup> Although Byzantine gardens can serve worldly ends, there is also a long tradition linking gardens to retreat, contemplation and repose that cannot be ignored. Gardens serve such non-worldly purposes in the Bible and in Virgil’s praise of the life of retirement in the *Georgics*. In the Judeo-Christian tradition gardens recall Paradise, and the abundance and glory of the Garden of Eden. There is a darker resonance as well, since the Garden of Eden was also the site of man’s fall, and another garden, the garden of Gesthemane, was the site of Christ’s agony and betrayal.

the temple building at its dead center, the garden park also has passed from a living dynamic into a static symbol of art—a *theoria*, something to behold, to contemplate, to theorize about” (161-62).

In spite of the insistence of the Byzantine narrators that the gardens they describe are natural, pure, and removed from reality, the reader cannot disregard the remarkable application of the human hand to these *loci amoeni*. In that sense, (and in a post-romantic sense) the gardens of the Byzantine romances are not natural at all, although supernatural phenomena and Chance—whether under the guise of Eros, the Muses, or the Graces, control the outcome of human affairs. Natural and artificial paraphernalia has been brought there; trees are pruned and cultivated in ways that are, as it were, “natural” even before they are cut down. It is precisely this tampering with nature that makes the gardens so wondrous and beautiful for the Byzantine reader, but that’s partly because of the shaping, call it intrusive hand or “human-artist” gardener.

Byzantine archaeologists and garden-historians with Henry Maguire prominent among them, have recently argued that literary ekphrases of Byzantine gardens are not completely divorced from the works of art they describe; “in spite of modern depredations,” Maguire argues, “enough survives in Istanbul of some Byzantine gardens to show that the descriptions of those spaces by Byzantine writers were at least partly accurate and supportive of a literal reading” (252).<sup>72</sup> Maguire attempts a reconstruction of four suburban Byzantine parks (the Philopation and the Aretai, both located in the outskirts of the City, and the

---

<sup>72</sup> See “Gardens and Parks in Constantinople” in *Constantinople: The Fabric of the City*, Dumbarton Oaks Symposium, 1998.

Mesokepion and the Mangana, in the area of the Great Palace) from both archaeological and ekphrastic information found in historical and literary sources respectively. The results of Maguire's search reveal a remarkable resemblance between historical gardens and their fictional counterparts in the Komnenian and Palaiologan romances: Maguire invites the reader to imagine the Philopation as "an enclosed park, containing not only a natural landscape of hunting but also constructed features such as canals, pools, and pavilions" (253) and the Mesokepion as a garden "conventionally abounding in every kind of plant and irrigated with abundant water" (258), entirely enclosed on the north and south sides by porticoes, on the west by a church, and presumable on the East by a wall.

The Mesokepion in particular bears significant similarities with the gardens of *DA*, *HH*, *RD*, *LR* and *BC*: it is presented as a small, secluded garden, "an enclosed paradise that must, to some extent, have had the appearance of a sunken garden, especially when viewed from the southern terrace. It was, therefore, in the tradition of such Roman imperial gardens as the long sunken garden of the east side of the Palatine in Rome, which was surrounded by porticoes on two levels" (259). Maguire, like Barber before him, reveals sufficient points of convergence between the literary descriptions and the physical fabric of the Byzantine garden to demonstrate that ekphrases of Byzantine gardens were often anchored in reality. The walled gardens of the Byzantine literary romances are, like the remnants of actual Byzantine gardens, enclosed and

filled with colorful songbirds,<sup>73</sup> yet the only animals present in the poetic gardens seem to be painted or sculpted ones. According to Dolezal and Mavroudi,

Several Byzantine chroniclers give evidence for automata at the court of Emperor Theophilus (829-42) and the destruction of them under his successor, Michael III (842-867), suggesting that by or during the time of Constantine VII more automata had been constructed for the palace confines. [. . .] There is more extant evidence of a fascination with fantastic devices in the Islamic world. For example, Abbasid palaces in the ninth-century capital of Samarra may have had automata, and there survives a Muslim account of the visit of two Byzantine ambassadors to the Abbasid court in Baghdad (917) that remarks on their amazement at the sight of a lavish artificial tree with singing birds placed in a pond. (129).<sup>74</sup>

Similarly, the garden of Mangana (one of the four gardens Maguire has attempted to reconstruct in “Gardens and Parks in Constantinople”) was enclosed by a wall and within the enclosure lay “buildings with covered galleries for waling, meadows, filled with flowers, both on the perimeter of the estate and in its center, and groves of trees, some suspended in the air, others set on the flat ground below” (260).

---

<sup>73</sup> In the garden of the palace of Digenes on the Euphrates, there were tame peacocks, parrots, and swans; “the swans browsed for food in the water, the parrots sang in the branches among the trees, the peacocks paraded their wings among the flowers and reflected the flowers’ colours in their wings” Jeffreys, G, Book 7:31-41 (205).

<sup>74</sup> Dolezal and Mavroudi’s essay “Theodore Hyrtakenos’ Description of the Garden of St. Anna” is published in Littlewood, Maguire, and Wolschke-Bulmahn (eds), *Byzantine Garden Culture*.

A telling example of the artificial nature of the Byzantine garden appears in *Hysmine and Hysminias*. The first five books of Macrembolites' romance involve descriptions of allegorical paintings, spectacular pictures, and automata found in the grounds of the castle of the hero's host, Sosthenes (who is also the heroine's father), while Hysminias, in the company of trusted servant, Kratisthenes, is sent in the capacity of herald as part of a regular religious festival from his native Eurykomis to the neighboring town of Aulikomis.<sup>75</sup> While in Aulikomis, the hero accepts the generous hospitality of the wealthy Sosthenes, who holds a generous banquet in the visitor's honor. Amidst the festivities, Hysminias is struck by the beauty of Sosthenes' daughter, Hysmine, who serves the wine.

The hero's first encounter with Love occurs in Book two, where Hysminias visits his host's garden with Kartisthenes, and the two examine a large frieze depicting in the central scene a winged and naked youth armed with bow, arrows, swords and torch, seated on a chariot, and followed by a multitude of people, birds, and beasts. This terrifying figure of Eros subsequently occupies central stage in Book three, where the hero describes a sequence of dreams he experiences that night; initially, Eros, the figure in the frieze, appears and enrolls him as slave, forcibly joining his hand to Hysmine's; panic-stricken, Hysminias wakes up and tells Kratisthenes that he is now a slave of Aphrodite and must renounce his duties as a herald. What follows Hysminias' dream is the

---

<sup>75</sup> The idyllic garden is presented early into the narrative and its description takes up five whole books. In these books the narrative concentrates on emotion and fantasy, unlike the remaining of the romance. "The main difference between the two parts of the romance lies in the type of density of the action. Books I-V concentrate on the emotion and fantasy, while the action, in the conventional sense, is condensed into Books VI-XI" (Alexiou, Margaret 29).

description of a series of allegorical paintings, namely those of Eros, the four cardinal virtues, and the twelve months of the year; in the course of their description, the hero falls in love with Hysmine.

Ο στρατιωτης ο πρωτος τον καιρο του χρονου παραδεικνυει,  
 / οτε πας εκστρατευει στρατιωτης ανηρ οπλοις / ολοις  
 καταφραξαμενος. / Ο μετ' αυτον αιπολος, αιξ η παρα τοις  
 ποσι τικτουσα / και συριγξ οιον αυλουσα τον καιρον  
 εμφανει, καθ' ον / ποιμην εκ χειμωνος εξαγει το ποιμνιον  
 και καθ' ον / τικτουσιν αιγες και συριγξ αρμοζεται. / [. . .] Ο  
 μεσον ασταχυων ανηρ, ο το δρεπανον εχων και / θεριζων  
 τον ασταχυν τον καιρον του θερους σοι / καταζωγραφει. /  
 [. . .] ο τον βοτρυν εκθλιβων, ο τον βοτρυν τρυγων τον /  
 καιρον της τρυγης σοι παριστα και το καταπεπανθαι τους  
 βοτρυας [. . .]" (18. 1-13).

Byzantine ekphrases of terrestrial idylls focus on the interaction of man, nature, and art, and point out the need for a human and a supernatural agent both of which will maintain the garden. An unattended garden is bound to decay, whereas with human intervention—through artistic means and expression—it stands a chance to remain forever beautiful, a representation of the greatness of nature and God. “The artistic representation of the seasons upon the walls provides a metaphor for the understood ordering of the natural world in accordance with male discourse. The hand of the artificer, the man active within nature, controls nature setting its bounds. The timelessness of this order is made apparent

in the artifice with which nature is represented and praised. Artifice is understood to surpass the decay of the natural world” (Barber 8).

In the Palaiologan *TA*, the enclosed garden which is also the private retreat of the heroine, is the place where the most important events of the romance unfold. The hero, in the company of his select retainers, chief among them Patrouklos, brilliantly rescues a Myrmidian outpost that has long been under siege and pursues his father’s enemies back to their own castle. Prior to the chase, however, Achilles’ cousin warns the hero about the power of love, for if it happens, he will certainly learn what it means—namely, to reject one’s family in order to follow the loved one. To give this warning substance, Patrouklos declares that he himself does not fear the present dangerous expedition—he is in love himself, and to him that is all that matters, for loves devours the heart (304 ff).<sup>76</sup> Achilles marches toward the besieged castle and as he approaches it he notices a group of women looking down from the walls; among them is the daughter of the defeated king, three of whose sons Achilles has killed. The hero falls in love with the unnamed heroine at first sight, and the harsh world of battles and male prowess is replaced in the narrative with a series of elaborate ekphrases of the beauties of the girl, her palace and chambers in particular. Achilles appears so smitten with love, that he commissions the painting of a picture of Eros, which he vows to worship as a relic.

---

<sup>76</sup> Patrouklos’s love-affair is no more heard in the romance; there is no second pair of lovers in the *Achilleid* as we have it.

Οριζει ζουγραφιζουν το απεσω εις το κουβουκλιν  
 την Αφροδιτη την φρικτην, τον Ερωταν τον μεγαν,  
 και προς εκεινην ελεγε μετα πολλων δακρυων:  
 ‘Ερω μου, τι σε επταισα και τι κακον σε εμοικα  
 και την καρδια μου συρριζον καθολου εξανασπας την;  
 Εμε σπαθια ουκ εντρεψαν, κονταρια ουδε ολωσ,  
 και απο μονου βλεμματος εσφαξες με εξαφνης;  
 Εχεις με, Ερω, τριδουλον, δουλον δεδουλομενον’  
 (N 843-50).<sup>77</sup>

Disheartened at first by the heroine’s indifference, the hero grows lovesick, but he eventually finds the courage to visit her in her own garden, which becomes the scene for both her renunciation of love and Eros’ epiphany—in the form of a bird, Eros intervenes and changes the heroine’s scorn for Achilles to love.

Similarly, in *DC*, amid slaughter and destruction, Drosilla and Charicles are first presented to the reader as captives near a meadow sacred to Dionysos. The meadow, much like the enclosed garden of *TA*, is presented in an ekphrasis and is followed by a detailed description of the heroine, linking the beauty of the garden with the beauty and qualities of Drosilla—I. 77-115:

Λειμων γαρ ην ηδιστος αυτης εν μεσω,  
 ου γυροθεν μεν ησαν ωραιαι δαφναι  
 και κυπαριττοι και πλατανοι και δρυες,  
 μεσον δε δεντρα τερπνα και καρποφορα.  
 Ποα τε κρινων και ποα τερπνη ροδων

<sup>77</sup> “He ordered [a portrait of] Aphrodite the Terrible to be painted on the outer surface of his shield and Eros the Great; and then, with tears in his eyes, directed his words toward her [Aphrodite]: ‘Love, how have I wronged you to deserve this utter shattering of my heart?’ I resisted swords and countless arrows, yet one of your glances unexpectedly pierced my heart, turning me [in turn] into a servant of yours, two and three times your slave I have become.”

πολλη παρην εκεισε, λειμωνος μεσον  
 αι καλυκες δε των ροδων κεκλεισμεναι  
 η μαλλον ειπειν μικρον ανεωγμεναι  
 ταυτην εθαλαμομενον ωσπερ παρθενον...  
 Και ναμα πηγμαιοιον ην εκει ρεον,  
 ψυχρον διειδες και γλυκαζον ως μελι.  
 Κιων δε τις αν ειχε της πηγης μεσον,  
 εσωθεν ουτω τεχνικως γεγλυμμενος.  
 [. . .] Λευκων δε πετρων της καλης πηγης μεσον,  
 αγαλματων εστηκεν ευξεστων κυκλος  
 Οι δ' ανδριαντες ησαν εργα Φειδιου  
 και Ζευζιδος πονημα και Πραξιτελους,  
 ανδρων αριστων εις αγαλματουργιαν. (Hercher 140).

The walled castle as a *locus amoenus* features for the first time in the Palaiologan romances, and is completely absent in the narrative of the novelistic romances of the Hellenistic period.<sup>78</sup> The Byzantine authors had some knowledge of romances written in the West, yet their original contribution to the Byzantine romance is based on the western elements they adapted from the

---

<sup>78</sup> Description of gardens in the Byzantine romances come to resemble those of Byzantine fortresses, or citadels—καστελια, or φρουρια—which were enclosures of whole cities, not unlike that of Constantinople. Fortified settlements played a vital role in Byzantine defense. To some degree they represented the anxiety and fear of western and eastern invasion, yet the assumption that the walled garden in the romances came to represent the beauty, self-sufficiency, and paradisiacal potential of Constantinople itself is not unwarranted either. The paramount importance of fortification is noted in the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, under the definition of Καστρον, according to which, “In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, when the need for defense against the Turks was paramount, *kastra* were assigned for life to individuals who assumed the obligation of maintaining and defending them. On the death of the concessionaire, the *kastron* returned to imperial control; normally it was put in the charge of a *kastrophylax*” (1112).

Frankish romances and in turn assimilated into their work, extending the possibilities of the Greek genre.<sup>79</sup>

In *KC*, for instance, Kallimachos sets out to explore Ogre's castle, an act that leads him to a series of adventures. The Byzantine hero bears many similarities with the knights and their quests as described in Chretien's romances and the Arthurian tradition. In the *Knight of the Cart*, for instance, both Lancelot and Gawain exhibit similar personality traits with the Byzantine hero—always brave and undefeated, they march into the most impossible quests. Both Arthurian heroes ride off to rescue the abducted queen, yet in all the time they share on the road, Lancelot always seems to take the initiative, first in the incident of the Perilous Bed, and later when he offers Gawain the choice of the two dangerous bridges. In the earlier Arthurian romances, Gawain was the most distinguished knight of the Round Table; in the *Knight of the Cart*, though, his excellence is diminished in contrast to Lancelot's bravery, which originates in his love for the queen.

Much like Kallimachos' scorn toward the power of Eros, Lancelot's only failing in his adventures is his hesitation, for just two steps, before entering the shameful cart. His hesitation reflects his momentary unwillingness to humiliate himself in the service of love, although later he does not hesitate to humiliate himself in following the queen's will at the tournament of Noauz. His early failing thus, just like the flaw of Kallimachos, is not in the area of knightly

---

<sup>79</sup> Caroline Cupane has contributed important scholarship to the study of the walled castle motif in Byzantine romance; I have relied on her research to study the walled gardens and castles of the romances analyzed in this chapter.

excellence, where Lancelot is the epitome of perfection, but in his status as a lover.

Caroline Cupane identifies the first appearance of the walled castle in medieval Greek romance in the description of Digenes' palace—the one the Byzantine frontiersman built for his wife (E, 1606 – 94, in Alexiou's edition). Digenes' castle, unlike those in the romances of *KC*, *LR*, and *BC*, bears significant similarities with Arabic designs of forts and even decorative details. Cupane claims that the mysterious castle, as a central motif in the romances of *LR*, *KC*, and *BC*, has been “borrowed wholesale from the Western romance, but fully and creatively homogenized with the earlier Greek tradition, is of great importance for our understanding of the way in which these original romances relate to Western narrative literature” (Beaton 159).

The role of the castle in all five original Byzantine romances is similar and there is an obvious link between the castle and the central theme of love. Eros casts his spell on the protagonists, and is responsible for the development of the plot narrative. In *Belthandros* and in *Libistros* “the castle is specifically the domain of Eros the King; in the castles of in *Kallimachos* and in the *Tale of Achilles*, Eros is predominantly featured in a painting there; in the tale of Troy, Helen's castle is besieged by all the eligible princes of the world, who fight tournaments to determine who is to win the owner as his bride” (Beaton 159). In *BC*, inside the Castle of Eros there are a number of elaborately crafted and decorated automata, presented in an ekphrasis that includes a description of the grounds of a remarkable garden (lines 286-90):

Ανωθεν βλεμμαν ερριψεν ως προς τα δεντρι ταχα  
 και δεντρων ειδε καλλονη και ισοτηταν ευμορφην  
 και την κορμοαναβασιν ευκολωτατην πανυ,  
 οτι να ειπες εκ παντος οτι ρουκανοτεκτων  
 ερρουκανοετουρνευσεν, σταθμισας επηξεν τα.<sup>80</sup>

The metaphor of the lover's heart as a walled castle appears in both *BC* and *TA*. In the *BC* romance, it is obvious that the destiny of the hero is closely related to the very existence and future of his passion. His fate, after all, is carved in stone beneath the statues from which flows a river. In *TA* the hero "subdues a sumptuous castle by force before being smitten with love for his princess, whom he abducts after pole-vaulting with his javelin into her walled garden and demonstrates his virility by knocking down the chamber in which she had been secluded" (Beaton 162).

The six romances adapted into Greek from Western European originals during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries (*Apollonius of Tyre*, Boccaccio's *Tesseida*, *Imperios and Margarona*, *Phlorios and Platzia-Phlora*, *The Tale of Belissarios* and *The War of Troy*) offer ample proof that western secular literature was of interest to Greek writers. Western influence is also evident in the vernacular adaptations of at least two western romances: *Phlorios and Platzia-Phlora*, a version of the widely diffused *Floire et Blancheflor*, and *Imperios and Margarona*, an adaptation the French *Pierre de Provence et la bele Marguelonne*.

---

<sup>80</sup> "He raised his eyes in the direction of the trees / and saw the beauty of the trees and their shapely evenness / and the ascent of their trunks unimpeded altogether / such that you'd say a lathe-turner had turned / them on his lathe, and fixed and put them there" (Beaton 149).

Overall, although the Byzantine writers of the 12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries differed markedly from their Hellenic predecessors given their distance in time and religious belief, they succeeded in adopting many narrative themes from the ancient Greek novel, which they in turn adapted, making the old genre their own. Byzantine descriptions of paradisiacal, romantic, and even historical gardens are linear successors of both a pagan and a Biblical tradition.<sup>81</sup> The Byzantines inherited from antiquity the appreciation for nature and made it part of their own Greco-Roman and Christian culture by confining nature (or an artificial form of it) within the grounds of the Byzantine castle.<sup>82</sup> Even though enclosed gardens certainly existed in the ancient world, especially in urban settings, the Byzantine romances reveal that there was a distinct change in mentality, since in the construction of Medieval Byzantine gardens, the ideas of enclosure and confinement came to predominate.<sup>83</sup> The most detailed descriptions are still

---

<sup>81</sup> The pagan tradition ultimately derived from *Homer* (mainly *Odyssey*, 7. 112-32) and Pindar, (*Odes* 2. 61-77).

<sup>82</sup> An example that typifies the Byzantine delight in the natural world, whether wild or tended by human hands, is offered by the historian Nikephoros Gregoras, who, in an introduction to the disastrous expedition of Andronikos III against the Ottomans in 1329 cannot help but remark, "the time had already come when the hands of spring give birth to plants and paint the earth with the varied colors of grass, offering much pleasure to the eyes of human beings" (Bonn, ed., 1:9.9, 433.9-11).

<sup>83</sup> Henry Maguire's study on the evolution of the Byzantine garden in light of religious upheavals and crises is enlightening. In "Paradise Withdrawn," Maguire argues that "Byzantine views of paradise changed along with their perception of other garden spaces. In the early period, paradise, even though closed to sinful humanity, was for most people still an integral part of the earth. Paradise was tangibly linked to the outside world through its four rivers, by means of which mortals could still share in its blessings. As in the case of the other late antique gardens, the view of paradise was connected to its surroundings, with the difference that the flow of benefits was reversed; in the case of the landed estates, the owner or his guests received views and produce from the surrounding landscape; in the case of paradise, the inhabited earth received its irrigation from the source of the four rivers within the garden. After iconoclasm, however another view of paradise grew in the popular imagination; it became increasingly remote, cut off, and disconnected from its surroundings. Situated in a forbidding and hostile terrain, it reserved its inner pleasures only for the elite group who were invited inside its walls. Similarly, in the accounts of other gardens, the Byzantines of the Middle Ages tended to cut them off from their settings, concentrating only on what had been gathered, or re-created, within the exclusive space of the garden itself" (34).

devoted to utopian realms, but the later Komnenian and Palaiologan romances present idealized realms that take the form of an allegorized garden, secluded and alienated not only by time, but by Christianity as well.

The possibility of achieving bliss in a terrestrial paradise, the existence of which was as real to the Byzantines as any other aspect of their daily life, is prevalent in all Komnenian and Palaiologan romances. In the narrative of these romances the Byzantine garden emerges as a fine combination of the pagan *locus amoenus* and a Christian Eden.<sup>84</sup> The classical Golden Age is appropriated in the late Byzantine romances in accordance with Christian doctrine: “the garden as the original and ideal home for humanity, not just a plot of earth for the cultivation of food and medicinal plants, became part of the Christian image of paradise, and soon the pagan *locus amoenus*, a flower-studded meadow fringed with trees and watered by a meandering brook, became the ‘flowery mead’ of medieval art and literature” (Mac Dougall 177).<sup>85</sup> It appears that for the Byzantine of the Middle Ages a terrestrial paradise became a more distant and at the same time a more

---

<sup>84</sup> Once the Christian Church, with its important grounding in Hebrew culture, began to influence Greco-Roman culture, elements of the Greek myth of Paradise, significantly altered and appropriated. “The Church Fathers were always quick to assert that histories of the Golden Age in Greek poets from Hesiod on were either literary plagiarism of the true story of the Garden of Eden, or at least pre-figurations. When during the classical revival of the Renaissance the imagery of the Golden Age threatened to establish itself as a separate entity, poets and philosophers sharply reaffirmed the religious and historical primacy of the Christian over the pagan myth, which was denigrated as mere imitation” (Manuel and Manuel 91).

<sup>85</sup> The ideal garden in the medieval West was initially a *hortus conclusus*, an enclosure, an image similar to the earthly paradise of the Bible. Most depictions of Eden in Jewish and early Christian / medieval sources describe it as a walled garden and in some way inaccessible, its entrance guarded often by an angel with a flaming sword. The gardens of the Byzantine romances are all enclosed, and usually an extension of a castle, often ruled by Eros, the King. Viewed from a Christian perspective, “the enclosed garden, a place of happiness that was protected from the ugliness of the sinful world, appeared to be also a place of refuge” (Delumeau 125-26).

fabulous place, resembling a garden cut off and minimally connected to the desolate landscapes that surrounded it.

In this chapter I have studied the construct of the Byzantine garden in light of some socio-historical circumstances that seem to have influenced the flourishing of a new tradition of utopian expression. Byzantine ekphrases of enclosed idylls, however, remain to be seen in an even wider set of cultural ideas about vision, reading, and the production of meaning (that are themselves to be seen within the frame of the changing social world of the Byzantine city and its conditions of artistic production) to yield accurate results. More specifically, the study of detailed (and perhaps often intrusive) ekphrastic passages in the narratives of both the Greek novelistic and Byzantine romances allows the reader to understand the literary trope of ekphrasis within a discourse—detailed descriptive detours do not merely describe works of art; more decisively, they play a role in the production of a cultural milieu that aims to create and enforce particular ways of *seeing meaning*. As the conditions of literary production and consumption change, so Byzantine poetry about art (ekphrasis) and nature is responding to these changes; thus, I hope, this discussion can be seen as the first step toward reconsidering the purposes and functions of ekphrasis not merely as the history of a rhetorical topos, but as the history of the formations of Byzantine sensibilities.

## CHAPTER III

***Mirabile Dictu*<sup>1</sup>: Marvelous and Sublime Manifestations in the Hellenistic and Byzantine Romances**

As geographers, Sosius, crowd into the edges of their maps parts of the world they know nothing about, adding notes in the margin to the effect, that beyond this lies nothing but the sandy deserts full of wild beasts, unapproachable dogs, Scythian ice, or a frozen sea, so in this work of mine, in which I have compared the lives of the greatest men with one another, after passing those periods which probable reasoning can reach to and real history find a footing in, I might very well say of those that are farther off: ‘Beyond this there is nothing but prodigies and fictions, the only inhabitants are the poets and inventors of fables: there is no credit, or certainty any farther.’

(Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*, Theseus)<sup>2</sup>

Ηθελε γουν Αλεξανδρος μαθεσθαι παρ' εκεινων,  
 αυται δοραι τινες εισιν αι σκεπτουσαι τα δενδρα;  
 [. . .] Και παλιν ηθελε μαθειν αυτην φωνην των δενδρων  
 οι δ' εφησαν: Αλεξανδρε, πρωιας γεγομενης,  
 ηλιου τουτου φαναντος, φωνη τις εκ των δενδρων  
 ανθρωπινη προσγινεται καλως χρησιμοδοτουσα.  
 [. . .] Ανατελλουσης δε λοιπον ως εθος της σεληνης,  
 το δενδρον προσεφωνησεν ελληνικη τη γλωσση:  
 Εν Βαβυλωνι σε θανειν, Αλεξανδρε, προλεγω  
 συ φονευθεις εκ των Ινδων και μαλλον ου δυνηση  
 γην Μακεδωνων κατιδειν η την Ολυμπιαδα.

*Βιος Αλεξανδρου* (4940–5000)<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These words are spoken by Aeneas as he describes the marvel of a man transformed into a bush on the shores of Thrace in the *Aeneid*—Virgil’s hero imitates the Homeric formula “θαυμα ηδεσθαι” (*thauma idesthai* or “marvelous to behold”). The phrase occurs repeatedly in “*Aen.* 1. 439 (Aeneas in cloud), 2.174 (Palladium in Achaean camp), 2. 680 (portent of flame around Julius’s temples, 3. 26 (the bleeding branch of Polydorus’s tomb), 4. 182 (description of Fama), 7. 64 (bees gathered on laurel), and 8. 252 (Cacus belching flames). The phrase almost always appears at the end of the verse” (Biow 3).

<sup>2</sup> The English translation of the opening lines of Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives* is by Arthur Hugh Clough.

<sup>3</sup> B. P. Reardon’s prose translation of the verse lines above has simplified the idiomatic original Greek while still preserving the essence of the narrative: “So they brought Alexander to where a shrine of the Sun

Adventurous traveling to far-off lands—whether by foot or by boat, performed willingly or by force—is a plot element of most medieval Greek romances. The protagonists in these tales of fantastic journey set forth to discover and explore unknown lands at the remote reaches of their world: the distant East or West, the extreme parts of the ocean, the *Ultima Thule*. They return to report that hidden treasures and paradisiacal gardens, fabulous prodigies, monsters, ghosts, demons, and angels inhabit the periphery of the earth's land mass.<sup>4</sup> The journeys the Hellenistic heroes undertake are products of the narrative imagination, and as such, they are “shaped not only by the universal laws of symbolic experience, but also by the local transitory statures of a given culture” (Zaleski 7). In this chapter I will study these voyeuristic narratives against the backdrop of the Hellenistic and Byzantine times. More specifically, I will explore how *descriptio* in the form of ekphrasis of marvels and paradoxes reveal significant social and cultural mores and even sensibilities arising from the Christian appropriation of

---

and Moon was. [. . .] Alexander sought to learn more about the trees, and they told him: ‘In the morning when the sun rises, a voice comes from the tree, and when it is at its zenith, and a third time when it is on the point of setting. And the same thing happens in the case of the moon.’ [. . .] And when the moon rose, the tree said in Greek, ‘King Alexander, you must die in Babylon and you will be killed by your own people and you will not be able to return to your mother, Olympias.’” (719-20).

<sup>4</sup> The Greeks of the archaic and classical periods had no word corresponding to our “geography”; neither the noun γεογραφία (*geographia*), nor the verb from which it derives occur before Eratosthenes of Cyrene, that is, before the third century BC. James Romm believes that “the most fundamental act by which the archaic Greeks defined their world was to give boundaries, marking off a finite stretch of earth from the otherwise formless expanse surrounding it. Without such boundaries, both land and sea would become *apeiron*, ‘boundless,’ and in fact they are sometimes so called in the poems of Homer and Hesiod” (10). It seems that the fears of mariners and voyagers of the Hellenistic and archaic times influenced the perception of the world-view of the Greek romance writers. As a result of its vastness, “the ocean present[ed] itself to the early Greeks as a terrifying and unapproachable entity. Just as a mouse placed in a center of an empty room will immediately dash toward one of the walls, so Greek sailors and seamen felt ill at ease when surrounded by large stretches of open water; they were accustomed, even when sailing the comparatively placid Aegean, to hug the coasts and stay within sight of land at all times. The prospect of sailing in waters so wide that no land could be seen was regarded with great apprehension, and open-sea voyages were attempted only under extreme duress” (Romm 15-16).

classical utopian ideas.<sup>5</sup> I will also consider the role of marvelous and mysterious stock narrative events (such as the “apparent” rape or gruesome death of the heroine and the abduction of one or both protagonists) played in the Greek novelistic romances.

The principal subject of Greek romances is secular love, but characters search for love in a world governed by capricious Chance: most of the time they are in the hands of powerful and selfish masters, who seem to have little concern for the fate of others. In *Aithiopeka* [*Aith.*], *Aristandros and Kallithea* [*AK*], *True Story* [*TS*], *Belthandros and Chrysantza* [*BC*], *Libistros and Rhodamne* [*LR*], *Rodanthe and Dosikles* [*RD*], and the *Alexander Romance* [*AR*], the hero and heroine early on find themselves surrounded by a strange crew bound eastward. *RD* begins *in media res*—a sudden attack by pirates on the town of Rhodes introduces us to the hero and heroine and initiates their trials. These imaginary voyages are situated in a zone between reality and invention, where the reader is left unsure whether or when the author crosses the boundary between fact and fiction.

In both the Greek novelistic romances and the Byzantine revival of the genre, marvels and supernatural phenomena characterize foreign, barbarian

---

<sup>5</sup> For the Christians the most important marvels were the sublime workings of God: “Acts of divine intervention or the miraculous encounters between man and God, were the ‘modern’ counterparts of the pagan supernatural and, in contrast to them, were held as absolute truth” (Kenseth 116). Medieval westerners considered natural wonders to be examples of God’s ingenuity; “less frequently they described them as cases of ‘natural erring.’ A great many animal, botanical, and geological specimens were regarded as marvels, but normally the term was applied when the object was unusually large or small, extremely rare, exotic, abnormally or grotesquely shaped or spectacularly beautiful. [. . .] No less fascinating to the European mind were the human prodigies: dwarfs, freaks, and other human anomalies often became the subject of art and poetry and were discussed at great length in natural histories. Although sometimes viewed as nature’s ‘mistakes,’ they were often regarded, like geniuses, as God’s marvelous work and the products of his divine wisdom” (Kenseth 118).

territory: they inspire excitement, fear, curiosity, and ultimately, relief (when the protagonists return “home” safely), and this range of emotions may well have made the genre appealing to readers during the early Middle Ages. Indeed, these works are “romances” not so much due to the erotic attractions of the hero and heroine, but to the adventurous and fabulous elements that are staples of these stories. In fact, many aspects of Greco-Byzantine imagination and secular literature involved the marvelous, both in this world and the “next”, in nature, people, animals, and objects, in geography and history. Le Goff, in his study of the medieval imagination, affirms: “marvels consisted in large part of enlargements or distortions of the normal, natural world. Giants, midgets, and creatures with extra appendages were not common but were basically natural” (410).<sup>6</sup>

The study of the marvelous is essential to understanding Greco-Byzantine utopian and dystopian perceptions, for it accounts for the diachronic popularity of the medieval Greek romance: the travels of the hero and heroine are confined to the Mediterranean Sea, a body of water that united, rather than divided, peoples and adjacent countries, with Mesopotamia as the eastern and Ethiopia as the southern terminal points.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> For the medieval people, the marvelous was as real a part of this universe as God and the operations of destiny. John Finlayson affirms this fascination with the marvelous “lies partly in the fact that, although not a part of most ordinary lives, its occurrences in the past and elsewhere in the present are amply documented by learned people” (374).

<sup>7</sup> Greek geographers’ perceptions of the edges of the earth among which were Scythia and Ethiopia are sometimes contradictory. Sometimes they are presented as places of transformation where destruction and chaos rule, and in other instances are described as affluent utopian realms. “Privileging the edges of the earth over the center, Strabo specifies that the Scythians dwelling furthest from that center, the Nomads, were often idealized by early writers, and later he himself agrees with this assessment. In fact, in a stinging indictment of his own culture, Strabo suggests it is the Greeks who are largely to blame for the moral decay

Such a study also reveals changes in underlying sensibilities and provides valuable information for the exploration of the supernatural and the sublime.<sup>8</sup> Lacking accuracy and empirical evidence about these unknown territories, descriptions of distant countries like Scythia, and large land areas like India and Africa become the Greek writers' utopias and dystopias. In reporting on marvels and paradoxes in remote places, the narrator functions as a "reliable" informer, since "here, the inaccessibility of distant space is seen from the poet's rather than the critic's viewpoint and is therefore regarded in a positive light, as an artistic resource rather than an investigative obstacle" (Romm 173).

The distant East, as distinct from the Levant, remained a shadowy image on the medieval Greek world-view and this becomes evident in the Greek novelistic romances. "The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscape, remarkable experiences"<sup>9</sup>; many centuries passed in antiquity before China and India were clearly identified as individual countries with independent

---

of the peoples around them. This inverse or negative ethnocentric scheme envisions foreigners growing not less, but more virtuous in proportion to their distance from the Greek center, which is here depicted as the most morally degenerate spot on earth" (Finlayson 46-47).

The Romans rarely stretched themselves far beyond the boundaries of the Greek romances: "in their imperial triumph many Romans were too complacent and too self-satisfied to dream of ideal polities; for them Rome was itself a utopia. But after the fall of Rome and throughout the Middle Ages new lands were constantly being incorporated into the utopian *mappamundi* from the seas to the west of Europe to Africa and India" (Manuel 21).

<sup>8</sup> Douglas Biow, in *Mirabile Dictu: Representations of the Marvelous in Medieval and Renaissance Epic* (1996), considers the role of the marvelous central in the study of any literary work that refers to it explicitly or implicitly. "By the European Renaissance," Biow explains, "the notion of the marvelous had developed into an aesthetic, and that a given period's conception as to what constitutes history in turn underpins the representation of the marvelous. For history has everything to do with the making of epic since Homer's *Iliad* and Ennius's *Annales*, and the marvelous has much to do with exposing history as a distinct social practice concerned with writing and viewing the past" (1).

<sup>9</sup> See Edward Said's *Orientalism*, 1978.

civilizations.<sup>10</sup> Edward Said emphasizes the geographical ambivalence and confusion (particularly about the “Orient”) that existed in the minds of the western people not only in antiquity, but throughout the Middle Ages in his book, *Orientalism*:

[ . . . ] there was a Near Orient and a Far Orient, a familiar Orient and a novel Orient. The Orient therefore alternated in the mind’s geography between being an Old World to which one returned, as to Eden or Paradise, there to set up a new version of the old, and being a wholly new place to which one came as Columbus came to America, in order to set up a New World. [ . . . ] Certainly neither of these Orients was purely one thing or the other: it is their vacillations, their tempting suggestiveness, their capacity for entertaining and confusing the mind that are interesting. (58).

There have been several “Orientalisms,” beginning with the Greeks’ first imaginary one in Ctesias (fl. 400 B.C.) to whom the East *was* India.<sup>11</sup> The idea of *Marvels of the East* began officially with Herodotus and then was adapted by medieval western Europeans who wrote extensively about it.<sup>12</sup> In the Greek novelistic romances, ekphrases of marvelous lands interrupt the narration and link

---

<sup>10</sup> Donald Lach notes that, “in the European popular imagination, and in many scholarly treatises as well, the mythical and the real about Asia often remained undifferentiated, even some of the most general geographical terms not being settled upon until later. The terms ‘Asia’ and ‘East’ are obviously imprecise as geographical conceptions. They are certainly no clearer when used in their adjectival forms to describe racial, religious, or cultural attributes. But before the great discoveries, these terms were used interchangeably and so broadly that Egypt was sometimes pictured on maps as belonging to Asia” (3-4).

<sup>11</sup> Ctesias was a Greek historian born in Cnidus, Caria, and a contemporary of Xenophon. In 416 B.C., he enlisted in the Persian court as a private physician to King Artaxerxes; he eventually returned to his native city 339 BC, where he worked up the valuable material which he had collected during his residence in Persia, partly from his own observation and partly from his study of the royal archives, into a History of Persia—Περσικά—(*Persika*) in twenty-three books, one of which is *Ἰνδικά* (*Indika*).

the unrealistic and the sublime. The myth of the Golden Age is incorporated into adventure stories and imaginary voyages that catered to contemporary taste for the bizarre and the exotic, a phenomenon which Frank Manuel attributes to political and socio-historical circumstances:

In one, the independent Greek city-states were being gobbled up by the massive imperial structures of Alexander's successors; in the other, the loose, disintegrating framework of feudal society was yielding to new, centralized, dynastic states. [. . .] There also occurred dramatic expansions of the known world to encompass distant lands and peoples. The conquests of Alexander, which pushed the intellectual and artistic horizons of Greece eastward, had their counterpart in the great European exploration of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. (81).

Several centuries before the composition of the first Greek novelistic romances, Homer had established a connection between supernatural events and adventurous travel in the *Odyssey*, as had Plato with the fairy island of Atlantis in the *Republic*. Such ethnographic and paradoxical tales of strange peoples and places told by Greek seafarers, writers, and philosophers excited the imagination of Hellenistic audiences because they were presented as factual descriptions.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Herodotus, the celebrated Greek historian, was born at Halicarnassus, in 484 BC, and is regarded by many as the father of profane history. Mary B. Campbell remarks that "the 'wonders' are the most extreme and exquisite projection of European cultural fantasy" (8).

<sup>13</sup> Carol Zaleski perceives the narrative recording of otherworld journeys as a healthy manifestation of the power of the imagination to perpetuate hope and progress. She argues, "a study of otherworld journey narratives reveals that, for all its crudity, somatomorphism appears to obey a fundamental law of the imagination. If accounts such as these are the product of the imagination, then for 'other world' we may read 'domain of the imagination.'" (51-52). Zaleski gives imagination its credit and place: "fortunately, some contemporary religious thinkers are helping to correct the common view that imagination is a tyrannical and capricious deceiver of those who seek truth. Sympathetic students of the history of Christianity are coming to appreciate the corporeal imagery that is undeniable part of this religious heritage and is nearly as pervasive as ever today" (52).

Odysseus's account to the Phaeacians of lotus-eaters, Cyclopes, and other strange creatures is built up of such matter, likewise the stories attached to the voyage of the Argonauts, featuring hybrids like long-heads and half-hounds, or pygmies and hyperboreans (people of the far North). . . . [T]hese fantasies came later, in Ctesias for instance, to be combined with reports of the scientific exploration of distant countries in the North and East, India in particular. The boundary between the factual and the fabulous was fluid. (Haag 117).

Although the East, whether India or China, was too far removed physically and spiritually to influence directly the Greco-Roman world, exaggerated descriptions of eastern terrains were abundant in folklore and in Persian myths and legends that circulated among the Greek diaspora of the Levant. These descriptions, in spite of their exaggerated nature, continued to fascinate and inspire Greek writers, who wrote about these exotic lands, creating a consciously unrealistic portrait of the East. The marvelous and the supernatural aided the process—they were the driving force behind the unprecedented popularity of the Greek novelistic romances, and even reappear, appropriated and modified according to Christian doctrine, in the Byzantine romances of the Komnenian and Palaiologan periods.<sup>14</sup>

The narrative treatment of marvelous and mysterious phenomena in the Greek novelistic romances, however, differs significantly from that in the

---

<sup>14</sup> Jacques Le Goff, in his study of medieval marvels, perceives the marvelous as “a natural form of the supernatural, a middle term between the divine supernatural (that is the miraculous, which depends solely on God's saving grace) and the diabolical supernatural (or magic, governed by Satan's destructive activity)” (12). Lach maintains that the Greeks and the Romans associated the East, and India in particular, with wonders and marvels: “India, as distinguished from China, was the scene of marvels and the habitat of monstrous animals and peoples. India was also looked to by the ancients as the source of the spices, as China was the land of silk” (19).

Kommenian and Palaiologan romances. In the latter the influence of Christianity and the appropriation of pagan practices shaped and justified the presence of the supernatural.<sup>15</sup> In terms of narrative expression, supernatural events were woven into the very form of the Byzantine narrative and their expression assisted the demands of the prose (in the novelistic romances) or the verse form (in their Byzantine counterparts). Moreover, in terms of rhetorical expression, ekphrasis is used in the Greek novelistic romances to project the arresting effect of the sublime and the grotesque, a practice altogether absent from the Byzantine romances, where allegory justifies pagan practices and binds Christianity with the supernatural in a narrative amalgam.

Supernatural phenomena are noticeably more widespread in the Greek novelistic romances, as opposed to the reappearance of marvelous and the sublime under a Christian guise in the Byzantine romances. Donald Lach accounts for the propensity of the Greek novelistic romances toward the wondrous and the supernatural in *Asia: In the Making of Europe*:

In the Middle Ages the myths of antiquity, as expressed by Ctesias or the authors of the legend of Alexander, were Christianized and embellished with biblical allegories and newer geographical fantasies. The myth of Asia as a land of griffons, monsters, and demons, lying somewhere beyond the terrestrial Paradise, slowly enmeshed the popular imagination of medieval Europe and gradually penetrated the popular literature of the crusading era. It

---

<sup>15</sup> Classical literary motifs, traditions, and concepts were modified and then appropriated in order to exist in a body of literature that rejected paganism, Classicism, and embraced Christianity. "Christianity embraced a diversity of ancient cultures, and more than other aspects of culture and folklore the marvelous drew upon these ancient strata. . . . The roots of the marvelous are almost always pre-Christian. The traditions in question being continuous, medieval Christianity was obliged to confront them throughout its history" (Le Goff 28).

was to be many centuries after Marco Polo before the last of these fables would disappear from scientific and critical literature. (20).

In *True Story* [TS], *Chaereas and Callirrhoe* [CC], *Daphnis and Chloe* [Daph.], *Leucippe and Clitophon* [LC], and the *Alexander Romance* [AR], marvels take place on the fringes of the world, and not in another world. It is worth noting here that ancient Greek (and, consequently, Roman) notions about the boundaries of the earth came from all sorts of sources: geometry, natural philosophy, travelers' tales, and—most important of all—epic poetry, as has been discussed above. During the Hellenistic period, few opportunities existed for rigorous scientific observation of geographical and sociological realities in the Far East.<sup>16</sup> It is thus perhaps easier to understand the frequency with which Medieval Greek writers have their hero move around the fringes of the world where the ordinary laws of nature are temporarily suspended.<sup>17</sup>

Alexander's letters addressed to his mother, Olympias, and his teacher, Aristotle, recount his adventures in India, his drive toward the end of the world, and his pseudo-scientific descriptions of animal wonders.<sup>18</sup> These letters present

---

<sup>16</sup> Le Goff perceives the marvelous as an important component of "the medieval imagination" arguing that it "drew upon an extant reservoir of culture, namely, the oral culture of which the marvelous was an important component. That the marvelous plays such a large part in courtly romance is no accident. It is intimately associated with the idealized knight's quest for individual and collective identity. The knight is tested by a series of marvels. Marvels such as magical charms aid in this quest, while others such as monsters must be combated" (29).

<sup>17</sup> James Romm, in *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought*, observes that even Strabo, almost five centuries later, found it difficult not to let his description of India (Book XV) degenerate into a catalogue of unexplained (and unexplainable) paradoxes.

<sup>18</sup> According to Pleij, Alexander was "shamelessly accepted as the perfect embodiment of what modern times would later prefer to cover up: discoverer and conqueror, the latter interpreted in the Middle Ages as vital to the necessary task of converting the heathens, which for Alexander simply meant civilizing them." Pleij adds that though Alexakis' eyes "we see the wonders of the East, which gave rise throughout the Middle Ages to more and more elaborate stories and depictions of India as a magic garden" (263).

Alexander not only as a conqueror, but also as a champion of Hellenic science: when he encounters a particularly fierce race of monstrous humans, Alexander's reaction is atypical of that of a military commander: "When they saw us, they rushed at the army. I was beside myself seeing them. So I ordered one of them to be caught and taken as specimens" (706). The hero reports on fabulous animals, men in animal guise, and even polymorphous creatures whose human or animal nature remain ambivalent: ". . . "wild men like giants, round bodied with fiery faces, who looked like lions. There were some others with them called Ochlitai ["mobmen"] who had no hair at all, four cubits high and spear's length across," and even "men without heads, though they spoke as men do in their own language; they were hairy, wore skins, [and] ate fish" (Reardon 706-7). Marvels are typically conceived by the Hellenistic authors within the ethnographic context of the humanly strange and monstrous: they "symbolically define the normative boundaries of a cultural system or by existing on, or just within its margins. This is certainly the case with monsters who are represented from time to time in histories, natural histories, encyclopedias, cosmographies, and travelogues from antiquity through the Renaissance" (Biow 6).

Unlike their Hellenistic predecessors, Byzantine romances introduce many supernatural events, reviving the idea of an earthly Paradise or a Golden Age, but this utopian "world" is located at the end, rather than the beginning of time. Similarly, marvelous journeys offer more than just pleasure, satisfaction of curiosity, escape, terror, and enjoyment; they present a more thorough explanation of reality than was available anywhere else, and where necessary concomitant of

the hero's heroism. For instance, Digenes, Belthandros, Kallimachos, and Libistros—the heroes of the Palaiologan romances *DA*, *BC*, *KC*, and *LR*, respectively—eventually enjoy a life of perfect bliss in a terrestrial idyll with their beloved ones after having endured numerous trials and adventures. Digenes settles down and builds a sumptuous palace with a garden (described in lengthy ekphrases) by the river Euphrates; Belthandros marries his beloved Chrysantza and amid royal celebrations the couple is proclaimed king and queen; Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe return to Ogre's castle and transform it into a wonderful palace; and Libistros and Rhodamne, having overcome adverse fortune and impossible trials, make their way back to the Castle of Silver reminding each other along the way of the letters and songs they had exchanged during their bizarre courtship. Howard Patch considers the enclosed garden and the enchanted castle to be essential elements of otherworld terrains.

The Otherworld realm is usually quite easy to identify. Its situation is various: on a mountain, perhaps, or on an island, or cut off from the every-day world by some sort of water barrier. [. . .] The other elements, however, are sufficiently fixed: a splendid castle, usually guarded by armed figures; and a garden, with a beautiful fountain or fair running streams, and trees and remarkable birds. For the people in the story the land is hard to enter, and sometimes it is still more difficult to leave. If one succeeds in getting away, one is often astonished how much time has slipped by during the sojourn there. (605).

For the Byzantine secular writers, the most important marvels were the sublime workings of God, which directed the life-path of the hero and heroine in a

universe governed by divine providence. In the narrative of *DA*, for example, marvels take place in the desert and in other remote locations of Byzantine Anatolia, which the hero guards against Muslim attack. These marvels often take the form of sexual and spiritual temptation, and the hero's behavior and actions are governed solely by heathen or Christian forces; consequently, supernatural events, beings, and objects are perceived as agents of God or the devil.

In *DA*, the warlike Maximo, a descendant of the Amazons whom Alexander the Great had brought from the land of the Brahmins, is depicted as a strange heathen and uncivilized figure in a Christian world: she is the very impersonation of foreign threat, and her defeat (the loss of her virginity) is both anticipated and justified. The hero's infidelities with Maximo are excused at some length throughout the narrative, because they are linked to his capacity as a protector of Christianity and the Byzantine borders from attack by Muslims.

Digenes, no longer able to resist her charm, finally admits:

I knew not who I was, I was all burning. / Then I tried all means to  
 escape from sin, / And I would reason thus myself accusing: /  
 'Demon, why love you all things that are foreign, / With your own  
 well untroubled all set apart?' / While I thus talked, my friends,  
 within myself, / Maximo lighted up my love the more / Shooting  
 upon my hearing sweetest words, / And she was young and fair,  
 lovely and virgin, / Reason was conquered by profane desire;  
 (VI. 3251-61).

In *AR*, pagan and Christian elements are intertwined in the description of locations that are governed by supernatural forces.<sup>19</sup> Such literary amalgams result from a mixture of oral folklore and account for the diachronic literary appeal of the Greek novelistic romances. The numerous versions and translations of the lost original *AR* ultimately derive from or are related to a Greek quasi-fabulous prose-biography of Alexander, which was erroneously attributed in a manuscript to Alexander's official "publicist," Callisthenes.<sup>20</sup>

The Alexander legend offered many opportunities for distortion, interpolation, and contamination that must have occurred when so many reductions were being made. The story of Alexander, in fact, represents a multi-cultural miscellany of quasi-fictitious and fictitious traditions on the travels, adventures, and exploits of the Greek commander: "originally a blending of literary and oral sources, passed entirely, or almost entirely, into the realm of

---

<sup>19</sup> *AR* is by far the most popular and widely read of all the Greek novelistic romances—it has probably been translated into more languages than any other book except the Bible. Its author, Alexander's official historian and nephew of Aristotle was a Hellenized Egyptian who lived in Alexandria between A.D. 140 and 340. John Boyle notes that the literary and historical blunders of *AR*'s author often outdo his creative talents: "the original author of *AR* is guilty on almost every page of historical and geographical blunders of the most glaring kind; and his own inventions are often in poor taste, as when, for example, he causes Alexander to approach Darius disguised as his own ambassador and then, at a banquet, to pocket the gold cups from which the guests were drinking and then, finally, when his identity is discovered, actually to make off with the cups!" (14).

For the composition of his work Pseudo-Callisthenes relied on two earlier works: "the first of the two books was a varied collection of fictions concerning Alexander. It included a sort of epistolary novel of about 100 BC, which consisted chiefly of the correspondence of Alexander with his adversaries, notably Darius and Poros, and revealed the character of the correspondents as ancient epistolary fictions were meant to do" (Reardon 650). The other main source for the romance was a history deriving from Kleitarchos (circa 300 BC), "who is said by Cicero to have written rhetorically and dramatically—not, one notes, truthfully. The author may have had other sources too—in particular, more popular Egyptian stories, available in Greek, of Nectanebos and of Sesonchosis—though scholars no longer think that oral tradition played a significant role" (Reardon 651).

<sup>20</sup> There are three main traditions or recensions derived from the original lost version, the so-called *A* text, and these three recensions subsequently formed the sources for all the other derivatives. The romances are attested in cultures as diverse as the Greco-Roman, medieval European and Islamic worlds, and versions were made in Armenian, Syriac Coptic, Ethiopic, Hebrew, Russian, and even Malay and Siamese.

folklore and was preserved from generation to generation on the lips of professional story-tellers rather than in the pages of books, in much the same way as the lost Persian *Hazar Afsana* ('A Thousand Tales'), the nucleus of the Arabic *Alf Laila wa-Laila* ('A Thousand and One Nights'), better known to us as the *Arabian Nights*" (Boyle 27).<sup>21</sup>

In most Greek novelistic romances, historical, mythical, and folkloric incidents combine to form a narrative whole. Manuscript illustrations showing Alexander flying to heaven in a chariot pulled by griffins or exploiting the depths of the Nile in a transparent bathysphere, probably have as much appeal for a modern audience as they did for a medieval one.<sup>22</sup> Chaucer, for example, was familiar with several of the legendary exploits of the Macedonian commander and offers proof of the widespread influence of the Alexander legend in the *Monk's Tale*: "The storie of Alisaundre is so commune / That every wight that hath discrecioun / Hath herd somewhat or al of his fortune" (VII. 2631-33). Tomas Hagg, points to numerous factors that contributed to the popularity of *AR*

---

<sup>21</sup> B.E. Perry has contributed significant scholarship regarding the influence of folklore and oral culture on the Greek novelistic romances. Defending the Greek novelistic romance as an autonomous, creative, and serious literary genre worthy of attention, Perry (in *The Origin of the Book of Sinbad*) notes: "in Hellenistic times, when the Greek novel was born on a low cultural level as a story dramatically told for its own sake and meant to be *read*, the number of short stories that were put into books by more sophisticated writers, on one formal pretext or another, was much larger than it had been previously; because the taste of those later times favored a story told on its own account, in spite of the conventions of formal and learned literature which forbade it. These formal conventions by which story-books were outlawed and looked upon as unfit for polite literature, prevailed for centuries both in the East and in the West; and when at last they were overcome, by the pressure of popular taste, the wealth of story-lore that suddenly blossomed forth into books, such as the *Arabian Nights*, *Sinbad*, and the *Gesta Romanorum*, was due to nothing else than the extension along its own lines into literature of artistic tendencies and narrative materials that had always been cultivated orally in the same regions" (25).

<sup>22</sup> Both of these illustrations were popular medieval motifs: see Ross, *Alexander Historiatus* 2, 38-41. On the griffin-flying chariot, see also G. Millet, 'L'ascension d'Alexandre,' *Syria* 4 (1923), 85-133.

(especially during the Middle Ages):

[. . .] the fabulous oriental content fascinated the medieval audience: the fabulous animals, the oracles, Alexander flying in the air. The narrative frame, the military expedition, was in itself slender, but could easily be padded out at discretion: each century through which the novel passed had the opportunity to see its favorite themes unfolded there. And the figure of Alexander himself, whose reputation also lived on outside the novel, never ceased to thrill the imagination: the world-conqueror, or the young man who died before his time; the representative of the Divine on earth, or rather a warning of man's insatiability and the vanity of all human aspirations? Alexander could thus be used in the preaching of the church as well as in political propaganda: he is presented as the feudal master who leads his men to victory, or becomes, as he sometimes does in Swedish version, the mouthpiece of political wisdom. (142).

The birth, life, and conquests of the Macedonian commander as they are narrated in *AR* have much more in common with the fabulous and the supernatural than the historical and the factual from which Pseudo-Callisthenes claims to have gathered his material. Whatever aspirations the original author

had, his main purpose was, evidently, to tell a story, since he certainly felt no obligation to recognize any historical propriety.<sup>23</sup>

The very birth of Alexander in the romance is associated with purely fictional accounts of miraculous phenomena and portents, all of which are narrated as historical facts: Nectanabus, the last of the pharaohs, seeks refuge, not in Ethiopia, as was in fact the case, but in Macedonia, where, in the guise of a magician, he seduces Olympias using hallucinatory plants that induce bizarre dreams, to cause her to imagine that she is having intercourse with the god Ammon. Olympias indeed sees god Ammon at night who prophesies that she is to bear a male child (Ammon's very own) who will be his avenger. Shortly thereafter Olympias vision, Nectanabus convinces the Queen to allow him to sleep in her chamber in order to intercede with the god on her behalf, and Olympias grants him his wish. Shortly after this, Nectanabus, disguised, wearing the fleece of a ram and a pair of horns, gets into bed with the Queen and "in this way, then, Olympias was taken by Nectanabos, thanks to his magical powers" (659).

The result of this union is the legendary Alexander, who grows to be a precocious youth, well educated and endowed with natural curiosity and a drive for military conquest. In his first campaign the young general leads a totally

---

<sup>23</sup> *AR* is an amalgam of fiction and pseudo-historical narratives. Martin Braun's analysis of the historical and fictitious elements in the *AR* reveals that "the *Alexander Romance*, in common with history and myth, claims to recount actual events. And one may be sure that common people, to whom it belonged spiritually and socially, believed in the truth of the account as implicitly as a child believes a fairy-tale. The naïve claim of Pseudo-Callisthenes to authoritativeness, combined with his complete indifference to the facts of time and space, turn the *Alexander Romance* into a historical myth; it is a romance in so far as it is a work for the entertainment of the reader, written in prose" (33).

unhistorical expedition into Sicily and Italy, where he receives the submission of the Romans.

Pressing on, he [Alexander] rendezvoused with his fleet and crossed to Sicily. Subduing some people who opposed him, he crossed to the land of Italy. And the Roman generals sent Marcus, one of their generals, with a crown of pearls and another of precious stones, saying to him, 'we add to your crowns, Alexander, king of the Romans and of every land,' bringing him also five hundred pounds of gold. (672-73).

The most wondrous accounts of the East, however, are presented in Alexander's letters, one sent to his teacher, Aristotle and the other to his mother, Olympias. Both letters are filled with legends and folklore associated with Alexander, including tales of wild men, fabulous beasts, and talking trees. The Greek commander reports the death of the great Persian king Darius and the punishment of his assassins, before he continues with a lengthy account of creatures and flora he came across as he and his troops were marching further East.

We came across many animals: six-footed ones, three-eyed ones, five-eyed ones ten cubits long, and many other kinds of animals. . . . [W]e came to a sandy place, from which emerged animals like wild asses of more than twenty cubits. And they had not two eyes each but six each. . . . And my friends persistently advised me to turn back, but I would not, because I wanted to see the end of the earth. (707).

Having conquered Armenia Persia, Alexander has an intense desire to locate and invade Paradise.<sup>24</sup> Reaching a region of shadows while trying to find the country of the Blessed, the Macedonian commander comes upon the fountain of immortality<sup>25</sup>; yet his desire to penetrate the deepest secrets of the universe is not quenched, and at another time, having searched what appears to his as the limits of the earth, “where the sky touched the earth,” the Macedonian commander tries with an ingenious mechanic’s help to rise into the air until a flying creature in the form of a man stops him and reminds him of his mortality: “Alexander, do you investigate the things of heaven when you have not grasped things on earth?” (712). In the Hellenistic world of late antiquity ascent motifs predominated, and as Alan Seagal suggests, “the heavenly journey provides a mythic ‘constellation’ of structural pattern for nearly all the manifestations of Hellenistic religion, including the imperial cult; mystery religions; prophetic, sectarian, and apocalyptic movements in Judaism” (Zaleski 19).

In the *Letter to Aristotle about India*, Alexander inquires about the possibility of seeing some other thing “worthy of admiration and history” (719-20). His restless curiosity is filtered through myth, as the hero reaches through

---

<sup>24</sup> The Garden of Eden was believed to exist in the Hellenistic times, and, although barred from ordinary approach, it was supposed to be waiting for the saints before their ascent to Heaven. Medieval maps often depicted its location, and from their testimony we get some of the same material: “Paradise is in the East, surrounded by wall or mountains, and sometimes cut off by an ocean. The result in general in nearly all our evidence is the same. Whatever barriers made approach difficult, this earthly region was a place in actuality located somewhere on the globe, and it was a place therefore that might be visited by travelers even if they had to have recourse to supernatural means. The literature on the subject was immense” (Patch 153).

<sup>25</sup> Alexander’s conquest of the East was closely related to his personal quest for immortality, which prompts Romm to note that “since Alexander’s trek toward the eastern edge of the world is in part a quest for divinity, the voyage beyond the *oikoumene* comes to symbolize mankind’s transcendence of the human condition. Unlike Heracles, however, Alexander never quite achieves that transcendence; at the outmost limit of travel he discovers that he is not only mortal, but in fact fated to die very soon” (115-16).

darkness for the ends of the earth and the Land of the Blest, and as he probes the depths of the sea and observes from the heights of the sky the ephemerality of the world he is conquering. On the advice of two Indians, he decides to consult the oracular trees of the sun and moon, and after an exhausting march he enters a sacred and luxuriant grove. In this paradisiacal grove at the crossroads of the Golden Age and the Garden of Eden, Alexander is confronted with his destiny<sup>26</sup>: asked three times (at sunset, moonrise, and sunrise), the trees can tell him only of his coming death: “King Alexander, you must die in Babylon and you will be killed by your own people and you will not be able to return to your mother, Olympias” (720).

India and Africa were especially noted for wonders in Europe and their exoticism was emphasized in Greek geographical treatises and the novelistic romances of the Hellenistic period. Pliny the Elder (A.D. 23-79), in the seventh book of *Natural History*, claims that geographers stress the marvelous.<sup>27</sup> Romm contends that India and Africa formed worlds unto themselves in ancient literature, “defined by the peculiar character of plant and animal life, by the

---

<sup>26</sup> Some critics perceive the figure of Alexander in Pseudo-Callisthenes as an Everyman, who, despite considerable odds, manages to prevail over perils and adverse fortune to become world renowned, yet only temporarily. The Macedonian commander eventually becomes “precisely what this grotesque image [a specific account of the marvels encountered in India taken from the letter of Alexander to Aristotle] proclaims him to be, a helpless and ultimately doomed man trapped in a world of wild animals. The landscape of the Indian wonders has become a grim allegory of the human condition, seen in its most starkly eschatological dimensions” (Romm 116-17).

<sup>27</sup> Pliny provides measurements for the Earth’s dimensions and boundaries in *Natural History*, and cites earlier sources: “Our part of the Earth, floating as it were in the ocean which surrounds it, stretches out to the greatest extent from east to west; from India to the pillars consecrated to Hercules being a distance of 8,568 miles, according to the statement of Artemidorous. The breadth of the Earth from south to north is commonly supposed to be only about one half of its length, or 4,490 miles. On each side, the uninhabitable parts have not been discovered. Eratosthenes, a man who was peculiarly well-skilled in all the more subtle parts of learning, has stated the whole circumference of the Earth to be 31,500 miles” (4).

bizarre behavior of springs and rivers, and by the alien races of human beings that dwell there” (82). In addition, the similarities between the two great land areas were sufficient for the two to be fused: “The idea that India and Africa were joined at a point below the equator was debated as early as Polybius’s time, and was later espoused by Marinus and Ptolemy” (Romm 82). It seems that geographic location, topography, and chief characteristics of these two regions depended primarily on the imaginative literature surrounding them.

Alexander’s legendary longing for knowledge—in particular his determination to see the earthly Paradise at the eastern extreme of Asia—drives him farther and farther towards the limits of both the world and a person’s capacity to acquire understanding.<sup>28</sup> Lengthy descriptions of his search appear in most recensions of the romances. Alexander tests India’s reputation as a haven to wise people when he comes across the gymnosophists—naked sages—by asking them a series of philosophical questions.<sup>29</sup> The Gymnosophists’ responses to

---

<sup>28</sup> Roman writers and geographers before Alexander’s ascent to power created much of an alleged plan for the Greek commander to campaign beyond the *oikoumene* with his Macedonian army. James Romm claims that many, after the death of Alexander, “seem to have felt it was the duty of Imperial Rome to carry forward the goals left unfulfilled by the dying Alexander”; hence the interest, during the period of Rome’s greatest expansion, in the “mysteries” of the headwaters of the Nile, Taprobane (Sri Lanka), the North Sea coast, and Ultima Thule” (139).

<sup>29</sup> The kind of intellectual fascination with the East, and with India in particular, that many Greek writers and historians of the archaic and Hellenistic periods exhibit is related, as James Romm points out, to the false perceptions these people had of the East, in their understanding India lay in a territory which there were no known boundaries: “the East, posed the problem of unboundedness even more insistently than the south” (82). As a result of this uncertainty, the Greeks tended to look on their penetration of the Asiatic frontier as “a daring assault on the terrors of distant space. Alexander’s march to the Hyphasis, for example, becomes enshrined in Hellenistic and Imperial literature not only as a heroic military venture, but also as a fantastic, unrelenting quest for the eastern edge of the world, though a landscape made menacing by monsters and evil portents. Explorations of Africa, by contrast, were more often targeted at a mystery of interior rather than exterior space: the source of Nile and the cause of its summer flooding” (83).

Alexander's philosophic questions leave the Greek commander unimpressed with their civilization, and so he marches to conquer the realm of the Amazons.<sup>30</sup>

Alexander returns to Babylon: he is only thirty-two and he has been warned of his premature death. In fact, several odd events portend Alexander's imminent death: a woman gives birth to a child whose body is human above the waist but dead, and a mass of writhing animals below. While his counselors offer various interpretations of this, the most prominent among them solves the mystery:

King, most powerful of all men, you are the human shape; the animal forms are those around you. Now if the upper part were alive and moving like the animals under it, then you would have gone on to rule over all men. But just as it has departed life, so have you, King. And those around you are just like the animals under it: they have no sense and in fact are savage to men, and those around you are disposed in just this way to you. (732).

In the late Hellenistic period, tales of primitive peoples living in an idealized terrain were, evidently, quite popular. Manuel claims that "living in a paradisiacal condition in the wilderness beyond the borders of civility were the products of a restless, discontented urban imagination" and that "soon enough,

---

<sup>30</sup> The Gymnosophists play a crucial role in another Greek novelistic romance, Heliodorus' *Aith*. In Book Ten the novel's numerous conflicts are resolved through the aid of the wise Gymnosophists, the chief priestly caste of the Ethiopians. Upon his return from a successful battle with the Egyptians, Hydaspes, the Ethiopian King, asks his wife Persina and the Gymnosophists to prepare to celebrate a traditional war-sacrifice. Persina, however, has had an ambiguous dream foreshadowing the return of her long lost daughter Charicleia, and consults the Gymnosophists who predict in an oracle that the coming sacrifice will not go as planned and that instead a member of the royal house will be restored. The role of the Gymnosophists is significant in resolving the final conflict in the romance, which involves the restoration of the royal status of Charicleia after a series of trials. Both protagonists eventually pass a test that proves each one's chastity, and the Gymnosophists start to rethink the ancient law regarding the human-sacrifice ritual.

this sophisticated primitivism incorporated the imagery of the myth of the Golden Age and the Judaic and Christian Garden of Eden” (37). One of the principal functions of travel-writing is to make the Other comprehensible while preserving enough of its difference to continue to generate audience-interest. In fact, the travel-writer’s citations in making what is foreign comprehensible to the audience at home, exaggerate and distort, keeping what is described accessible to but still distinct from his own culture.

Obviously, the romance writers who chose Alexander as their subject did not intent to produce a historically sound biography; instead, they produced literary accounts of what the Greek general meant several centuries after his death. As Reardon notes, “in this short and humble work is encapsulated, however inadequately for educated tastes, the striving of a real man and a great man, at the limits of human nature, something more important than either fact or simple fiction. In this perception lie the grounds for the otherwise bewildering success of the romance” (652). For all the failings of the *AR* author, the book itself was to be a phenomenal success, and its portrait of Alexander was to dominate the minds of posterity for a thousand years.<sup>31</sup> *AR* is only one of the

---

<sup>31</sup> In the introduction of his translation of the *Historia de Preliis—The JI Version*—R. Telfryn Pritchard emphasizes *AR*’s widespread influence, pointing out that the Alexander Romance tradition survived in more than thirty languages. “It appealed to the child-like sense of wonder of late antiquity and the Middle Ages, when Dares and Dictys were preferred to Homer, and the Alexander of the Historians seemed far less exciting than the hero of the Romance. Alexander’s march to the ends of the world and to the land of the blessed, his exploration of the depths of the sea and of the sky above, his encounters with the strangest of beast and human beings—all captivated the imagination of the Middle Ages. But there was another, more profound reason for its success. Already, in his lifetime, for many of his contemporaries, and especially for his soldiers, Alexander had become a quasi-mythical figure, and in subsequent ages the tales of this superhuman world-conqueror continued to stir men deeply” (6).

several Greek novelistic romances in which the mixture of folktale, adventurous travel, marvels, and love, dominate the course of the narrative events.

Interest in zoological and scientific wonders is yet another staple of the Greek novelistic romances. Descriptions of supernatural and zoological wonders are most frequent in *AR*, *TS*, and *WT*. In these works animal monstrosities, every bit as puzzling and freakish as those of India, inhabit the African wilderness: “just as the rivers of central India, in particular the Indus and Ganges, presented hydrological mysteries that were frequently compared to (and even connected with) those of the Nile” (Romm 83). Although an awareness of the supernatural and the fantastic were already present in Greek epic poetry (and elsewhere, among historians), it was only later that people took to noting for its own sake anything extraordinary or abnormal and hence interesting in the world of men.

The extension of geographical knowledge after Alexander encouraged contact with distant peoples and with previously unknown countries, where stories of the most fantastic kind could be located. The result was the emergence of a literature that was specifically, and explicitly, paradoxographical.<sup>32</sup> Bearing this in mind as background to the adventures that unravel in the Greek novelistic romances, we may find it easier to account for the adversities the protagonists are

---

<sup>32</sup> Alexander’s conquest of the East should be credited to a great extent to the work of many Greek and Roman geographers, mathematicians, and navigators, all of whom helped create a relatively reliable picture of the territory that lay beyond the bounds of a Greco-centric world. Accuracy and empirical evidence are not, however, representative elements of neither the novel nor the romance, and thus it is not difficult to understand how “in the *Alexander Romance* the greatest explorer is again paired up with the greatest of biologists in a heroic attempt to make the distant world safe for enlightened Hellenism. But in the *Alexander Romance*, Alexander’s march across India has also become something larger and more resonant: an eschatological journey which parallels the young hero’s quest for immortality or divine enlightenment. In this late stratum, that is, the Indian wonders become not only a source of pseudo-scientific puzzlement, but a symbolic landscape for the romance narratives which have rightly been referred to as the era’s new myths” (Romm 108).

made to suffer. Hero and heroine seem to be exposed to the most horrible misfortunes (manifested in the incredibly paradoxical events that take place in the course of their travels), but eventually they reach a safe haven, unscathed and happy, and reserve the rewards reserved for virtue.

In Achilles Tatius's *Leucippe and Clitophon* [LC], the turbulent adventures of the Byzantine protagonists are interrupted by long ekphrastic descriptions of exotic animals and plants, the Nile and its inundations, or physiological and psychological processes in people—kissing, weeping, loving.<sup>33</sup> Clitophon's initial indirect courting of Leucippe takes place in a garden, "a grove of very pleasant aspect, encloistered by a sufficiently high wall and a chorus line of columns that together formed a covered portico on all four sides of the garden" (188). Here, Clitophon begins his task by giving the house slave Satyros (with Leucippe in earshot) a lecture about the power of love among birds (peacock), minerals (magnetite), plants (the palm), waters (the Alpheios loves Aretousa) and even between different species (the viper and the eel). Within the thickly wooded garden, "a network of sturdy branches interlaced to form an intricate pattern wherein petals gently embraced their neighbors, leaves wound round other leaves,

---

<sup>33</sup> Reardon's study of the wondrous and bizarre incidents that occur in the narrative leads him to the conclusion that "the novel seems to draw on many different genetic resources: travel, adventure, love story, psychological study, picaresque narrative, paradoxography, and description of paintings, any one of which could determine the dominant perspective and contents of an ancient composition" (173).

Exoticism is a staple element in this romance as well in most Byzantine romances. Like most medieval people, the Byzantines had a keen interest in exotic animals, both real and imaginary. For instance, "the ecclesiastical historian Philostorgius, apropos of the earthly paradise, affirms that the biggest animals were to be found in the eastern and southern regions of the earth in spite of what prevailed there. He enumerates the elephant, the Indian buffalo which he had seen on Roman territory, dragons ninety feet long and as thick as a beam of which he had seen the skin, the giraffe, the zebra, the phoenix, the parrot, and certain spotted birds called Geramatutes. He had beheld at Constantinople the picture of a unicorn: it had the head of a dragon, a twisted horn, a beard, a long neck, a body like that of deer and the feet of a lion" (Mango 179).

and fruits rubbed softly on other fruits” (188); thus far, the hero concludes, “the world of plants knows intercourse.” Love eventually does conquer all in the course of the novel and the hero declares with fervor that no creature is able to avoid cupid’s fangs:

There is among reptiles another sacred mystery of love, drawing not only members of the same, but members of different species altogether, [not to mention] a stone of Magnetia that has a strong desire for iron. If she but sees and barely touches a piece of iron, she draws it to herself, as if by the power of an erotic power within. This is a marvelous kiss between erotogenic stone and erotopathic iron. (188).

In *Chaereas and Callirhoe* [CC] the wondrous and the superhuman do not result from the protagonists’ numerous adventures, but rather from the sublime beauty of the hero and the heroine that conspires against them at every turn. Callirhoe’s beauty can be compared only to that of Aphrodite, and precisely because of her extraordinary good looks, she is implicated in near-death incidents and torturous adventures: her beauty was “more than human, it was divine, and it was not the beauty of a Nereid or mountain nymph at that, but of the maiden Aphrodite herself” (22), a perfect match for an equally virtuous hero, who looks just as sculptors and painters represent Achilles and Nireus and Hippolytus and Alcibiades: “radiant as a star, the flush of exercise blooming on his bright countenance like gold on silver” (22). Rather than describe her at length, the

author evokes mental images by referring to popular works of art that everyone would be familiar with from public places and sanctuaries.

Similar associations of the hero and heroine with godly characteristics and extraordinary beauty also appear in Heliodorus' *Aithiopeka* [*Aith.*], in which the heroine, Charicleia, is described as a "creature of such indescribable beauty, that one might have taken her for a goddess" (354) the hero, Theagenes, even though he is attacked by bandits, "had a radiant, manly beauty, and his cheek appeared more gleaming white because of the red streak of blood running down it" (354). In the same romance, Habrocomes, is also renowned for beauty, which is so extreme that it enrages Eros himself, who determines to humiliate him.

At sixteen, admired like a god for his beauty, Habrocomes rejects Eros, claiming to be more appealing than the god himself: "His good looks were phenomenal, and neither in Ionia, nor anywhere else had there ever been anything like them. They treated the boy like a god, and some even prostrated themselves and prayed at the sight of him" (128). The winged god, however, devises a cunning plan and takes his revenge starting with the introduction of the heroine at the festival of Artemis. Anthia, who leads the festival, is a perfect match for the arrogant Habrocomes, because she is just as accomplished and of almost divine beauty, "an object of wonder, far surpassing the other girls" (129). Some people even thought her divine, believing her to be "the goddess in person; some that it was someone else made by the goddess in her in her own image. But all prayed and prostrated themselves and congratulated her parents" (129).

Violent abductions, near-death experiences, the seeming death of a protagonist, the apparent rape of the heroine, and the vulgar traditions of eastern “barbarians” are all typical plot-elements in the adventure-packed plot of Greek novelistic romances.<sup>34</sup> The narrative appeal and popularity of such incidents invested heavily in the detailed description of unexplainable, supernatural causes that made such incidents possible. In Heliodorus’ *Aith.*, the narrator begins his tale with a dramatic scene of mystery and excitement at the Heracleotic mouth of the Nile: a band of robbers comes upon a scene a mass slaughter that apparently took place at a banquet.<sup>35</sup> Only two people are found alive: the hero, Theagenes,

---

<sup>34</sup> In western Christendom strangeness and the marvelous were often associated with foreignness and the East. “The East, for the men of the West, was the great repository of the marvelous, the focal point of western dreams and magic. The East represented the truly foreign, and had done so for the Greeks and Romans, at any rate, since antiquity. From the East came both good and bad marvels and heresies. The men of the West were well aware of this, at time with surprising consequences. Paradoxically, when Marco Polo traveled to the East and reported what he had seen, mixing truth with falsehood but in any event telling of the truth, the men of the West refused to believe him. In the late Middle Ages his account of his travels was viewed as a book of fables, a fantasy, and it was referred to as *The Book of Marvels*, where in this case ‘marvel’ has the sense of mirage. It was as if the occidentals were unable to believe in the reality of the marvels of the orient” (Le Goff 41).

The most important class of works aside from literature that shows marvels going back to classical prototypes consists of the maps of the world. On these, the representation of marvels is a constant feature. “The Hereford map of the last quarter of the thirteenth century is perhaps the most outstanding example” (Wittkower 174). The map represents the terrestrial Paradise as a circular island near India, cut off from the continent not only by sea—but also by the battlement wall—with a gateway to the West. “Here,” Wittkower notes, “we find pictures of the fabulous races and animals distributed all over the globe. India and Ethiopia have the main share. In India live the sciapodes, the pygmies and giants, the mouthless people, the martikhora and the unicorn. North of India, in Scythia and bordering countries and islands, there are horse-hoofed men, people with long ears, Anthropophagi and Hyperboreans and also the Arimaspians who fight with the griffins. Ethiopia is inhabited by satyrs and fauns, by people with long lips and people with their head in their shoulders and breasts, by basilisks and gold-digging ants, etc.” (174).

<sup>35</sup> Arthur Heiserman’s study of Heliodorus’ descriptions offers interesting insight into the author’s manipulation of descriptive language to create suspense by offering fantastical details. “To appreciate [Chariclea’s] intrigues, we must understand her situation,” Heiserman advises. She is captive in what was, with India, the most exotic lands, on the southern rim of the world, its coasts washed by the Equatorial Ocean Stream that separates the Northern Hemisphere from the knowable antipodes. It is inhabited by barbaric black sun-worshippers whose cult is supervised by the famous Gymnosophists—naked, puritanical black sages. Heliodorus satisfies our appetite to learn about this romantic land. He inverts, or adapts, a terrain and a state religion. In Meroe, the sacred capital, are meadows consecrated to the Sun, the Moon, and Dionysus, though the Gymnosophists live in the Temple of Pan. The cults involve animal and human sacrifice. Theagenes and four white stallions are to be killed at the altar of the Sun, Charicleia and for oxen

and Charicleia, a divinely beautiful woman who is found nursing the badly-wounded, yet superlatively handsome, Theagenes. The bandits capture the couple, which in turn is tossed in the hands of yet different groups of bandits that capture it and take it to a village of herdsmen, where the couple is exposed to further abuse.

In *AT*, the fate of the female characters is just as turbulent and uncertain as that of Theagenes. King Antiochus, the heroine's father, commits incest raping his own daughter, and then leaves her distraught at the verge of suicide, which is averted in the nick of time by the intervention of her nurse. It is later revealed that the pregnant heroine who, after numerous adventures, becomes the wife of the hero, Apollonius, who reveals the King's incest. Charicleia gives birth to a daughter while on board of a ship, but "apparently" dies in childbirth. Her body is in turn placed into an elaborate coffin and is sealed with 20,000 gold sesterces, only to be discovered much later on the shore near Ephesus by a doctor who notices she is still alive. The heroine is eventually revived and, revealing her royal origins, she begs the doctor to make her a chaste priestess of Diana, which he does.

Charicleia experiences many more misfortunes, for Tarsia, her daughter, is to experience much harsher trials: she is taken to Mytilene and is sold in the slave market. There, Tarsia is purchased in a competitive auction by a pimp who advertises her virginity and puts it up for sale. The young heroine, however, skillfully convinces the customers of her royal roots by recounting her adventures,

---

at the altar of the Moon. Only virgins are suitable for these holocausts, and only married persons may officiate at them" (197).

and she even manages to make some money of them while still remaining chaste. The preservation of the heroine's chastity amidst violence and barbarism is the result of the adventurous traveling of hero and heroine in obscure Mediterranean lands and remains a staple of the Greek novelistic romances.

Excessive violence and near-death experiences also predominate in *CC*, where the hero, Chaereas, deceived into thinking that Callirhoe, his wife, is unfaithful to him, is enraged and kicks her in the stomach, and she in turn falls apparently dead. Shortly after this sinister twist, Callirhoe is offered a magnificent funeral and is placed in a semi-subterranean tomb with extreme wealth. She is soon "revived," however, by a group of thieves who break into the vault at night to rob the treasure—the narrator informs us that Callirhoe had been in a deep coma from which she recovered as the robbers entered. Astonished at finding the heroine alive, the captain of the robbers, Theron, decides to carry her off, along with the spoils and sell her as a slave.

Paradoxes and the word 'paradox' itself (παράδοξα) abound in the novel, and since the concept has much to do with the notion of fantasy and the wondrous or supernatural it deserves comment here. Arthur Heiserman associates paradoxical events and their effect in the narrative to the sublime and the author's intention to communicate emotions that are often violent and grotesque through descriptive details (often found in elaborate ekphrases that interrupt the narrative flow):

The paradox, that which is against or beside reason, fascinated the dialecticians and rhetoricians of Chariton's time! The universe itself was a paradoxical harmony of contraries. To define, grapple

with, reconcile, or scorn great opposites (One / Many, Passion / Reason, etc) was one of the principal acts of a philosopher; and Cicero showed how rhetoricians could use the paradoxes of the Stoics—maxims contrary to general opinion (e.g., that the possession of virtue is sufficient for happiness)—as commonplaces to argue any side of a case. The [Greek novelistic] romances also used the paradox as a commonplace of their art, but in a somewhat different sense of the term—the vulgar sense of ‘*marvel*’ or ‘*miracle*.’ That is an astonishing reversal of fortune, an event contrary to expectation, a recognition of discovery that evoked strong contrary emotions like joy and fear—these were paradoxes. When art made a paradoxical peripety or recognition seem possible, the reader might also enjoy a wonderful reconciliation of opposite opinions—that fortune is mindless and that there is a design in life after all; and this latter, sublime inference could be an aesthetic equivalent of the speculation that resolved contraries within a philosophical system. But since the main job of poets was thought to be the arousal and consummation of powerful emotions, the dramatic paradox, the marvels generated by the plot, naturally became the stock-in-trade of narrative art. It is important to note, however, that the dramatic paradox was not a ‘*fantastic*’ event; the marvels of early romance were necessarily seen to be possible, even probable, incidents whose ‘*realism*’ was established by the literary conventions of the time. Only when they were made to seem realistically probable could the paradoxes be taken seriously enough to appeal to the fantasies of readers. Chariton, for example, eschews myth, adopts a romantic historicism, and wants us to imagine that the dramatic and psychological paradoxes he so thoroughly exploits were actually, seriously suffered by citizens of the world he knew. (77-78).

Similarly, early in Xenophon's *Ephesian Tale* [ET], the heroine, Anthia, is almost sacrificed to Ares, but is rescued in the nick of time by Perilaus, a leading man of Tarsus. In Book three the heroine is implicated into a yet more violent incident: trying to avoid an unwanted marriage, she convinces a local doctor to give her a drug in order to commit suicide, yet the doctor's remedy is merely a sleeping potion and, to no one's surprise, she is entombed alive. When she awakes, she, like Callirhoe earlier, is saved by grave robbers who take her to Alexandria and sell her to slave dealers.

The most spectacular near-death experience that leads to the apparent death of the heroine is artfully reported in Achilles Tatius' *LC*. Early on in the narrative, hero and heroine get separated due to a shipwreck and are captured by brigands. Clitophon, by Fortune's intervention, escapes, only to witness an apparent sacrifice of his beloved Leucippe and is about to kill himself when it is revealed (to him and to the reader) that she has survived by a trick—a professional stage-actor who was also captured by the brigands offers to sacrifice Leucippe, and instead of a real blade, he uses an “extremely short blade, no more than an inch and a half.”<sup>36</sup> With the aid of the fake blade the actor succeeds in staging a most realistic illusion:

the audience believes the blade is penetrating the body, but actually it retires into the recessed hilt, leaving just enough point to cut the deceptive diaphragm and let the hilt itself rest flush against

---

<sup>36</sup> Fortune—Tyche (Τύχη)—is the most prominent force that directs the adventures and life-path of the protagonists in the Greek novelistic romances. The eminent role Fortune came to play in these literary works is intertwined with what Ben Perry perceives in *The Ancient Romances* as the “Hellenistic soul” in later antiquity. “Faced with the immensity of things and his own helplessness before him,” Perry argues, “the spirit of man in Hellenistic times became passive in a way that it had never been before, and he regarded himself instinctively as a plaything of Fortune” (48).

the victim. And when you draw the blade from the wound, the sword emerges from its recess exactly as the hilt is drawn upwards, and again misleads the spectators for the blade appears to plunge down into the wound as far it protrudes from the gadget. (219).

In Alexandria the heroine is again kidnapped by bandits, the dreaded Boukoloi that inhabit the Nile Delta, and Clitophon again thinks he sees her die. The hero, helpless, is forced to watch the bandits take a young woman, whom she erroneously identifies as Leucippe, tie her to a tree, disembowel her and eat her cooked remains. Struck by the atrocities of the bandits, he recalls the fate of Niobe and speculates, “perhaps the myth of Niobe was no fiction after all: faced with the carnage of her children, she felt just as I did, and her emotional paralysis had given the appearance of petrification” (216).

Similarly, in Antonius Diogenes’ *TW*, near-death experiences are a serious advancement in an adventure-packed plot of the tale, often associated with magical potions and the casting of spells on the protagonists.<sup>37</sup> Oracles, magic, and spells transform the protagonists and offer temporary escape into the realm of the dead: “next comes how Paapis followed the route of Dercyllis and her companions, overtook them on the island, and by means of magic imposed on them that affliction of being dead during the day and coming back to life at nightfall” (780). The only other element that stretches the boundaries of the fictional to the extreme is that of the temporary resurrection of certain characters that are keys for the advancement of the plot. The resurrection is by no means

---

<sup>37</sup> For more information on the subject, see Susan MacAlister’s *Dreams and Suicides: The Greek Novel from Antiquity to the Byzantine Empire*, 1996.

presented as a fictional account, and Antonius Diogenes narrates such a resurrection in all its seriousness and without the slightest doubt about its historicity in *WT*: “all these things and many more like them—their burial and return from the grave, Mantinias’s love affairs and their consequences, and other similar events on the island of Thule—Dinias is presented recounting one after the other on the authority of Decryllis for the Arcadian Cymbas” (780).

The marvelous and the sublime draw upon an extant reservoir of oral culture of which the marvelous was an important component.<sup>38</sup> Both, the anonymous *AR* and Lucian’s *TS*, are goldmines of cultural, local, and pseudo-historic information that derived from folkloric lore and evidently influenced the writers of the romances.<sup>39</sup> The romances of *AR* and *TS* “set a dreary narrative pattern for thousands of later utopias in the West,” Manuel argues. “Lucian’s parodies of the [Hellenistic] novels enjoyed lasting popularity and kept the memory of the tales alive even when the texts had disappeared” (65). *TS* or *Verae Historiae*, as it has also been referred to, has been a favorite novel since the Renaissance, primarily because of its wealth of fabulous, and blandly exaggerated historic accounts. Reardon vies the tale as:

an account of a fantastic journey—to the moon, the underworld, the belly of a whale, and so forth. [. . .] It is a parody of literary

---

<sup>38</sup> Le Goff, in his effort to establish a definition for the marvelous, places it between the miraculous and the magical, explaining, “it is neither good nor evil and Christianity can therefore tolerate it, but its roots are in a traditional, pre-Christian system. It draws upon folklore, even when folkloric sources have been altered by contact with high culture. For medieval man, what was astonishing about marvels was that they were tolerated by the church” (36).

<sup>39</sup> Tales of legendary heroes—both historical and mythological—and pseudo-historical accounts surrounding their exploits permeated the local folklore not just of the Greek-speaking diaspora, with its communities eager to establish their place within a unifying Hellenic culture, but even non-Greeks with whom they came into contact.

'liars' like Homer and Herodotus. Whatever it may now be to us, in intention the tale is a sort of literary criticism. But we are not in an ideal position to judge it as such, since many of the works the author is making fun of are not now extant, except in fragments in some cases: those of Ctesias, Iambulus, and Antiochus Diogenes, all of whom wrote of wonderful journeys. (619).

The narrator of *TS* begins his work with a "literary" warning: all books contain lies, especially serious books and most especially philosophy. His book, however, is exonerated since the author admits from the beginning that it does not contain a word of truth, neither does it include evidence for any of the claims that he makes. "My subject, then, is," the narrator declares, "things I have neither seen nor experienced nor heard tell of from anybody else: things, what is more, that do not, in fact, exist and could not ever exist at all. So my readers must not believe a word I say" (622). The narrative indeed revolves around the fabulous adventures of the narrator and his crew of fifty men; narrator and crew sail out one day from the Pillars of Hercules into the "western ocean" in an attempt to discover the limits of the ocean.

Like Dinius's expedition in *WT*, this voyage has purely scientific goals and ambitious ones at that: "My voyage was prompted by an active intellect and a passionate interest in anything new" (622), declares Lucian's narrator, and, "the object I proposed," he continues, "was to discover the limits of the ocean and what men dwelt beyond it" (622). The foreign lands and waters that extended beyond the Pillars of Hercules were fabulous, with terrifying creatures and supernatural wonders, yet "this outer realm, though terrifying in the extreme when

actually confronted by sailors and navigators, served as an extremely rich backdrop for imaginative literature” (Romm 32-33).

The strange, the foreign, and the barbarian—whether abstract or tangible—are almost always endowed with grotesque and monstrous appearances in the Greek novelistic romances. Eight days into their voyage, narrator and crew in *WT* reach an island in the heart of which are found vines with anthropomorphic characteristics that manage to seduce the men with kisses and arouse their passions.<sup>40</sup>

They also kissed us, and anyone who was kissed became drunk immediately and began to stagger about. But they would not let us pluck the fruit, crying out in pain as we tugged at it. Some of them even evinced sexual passion; two of my comrades embraced them, only to find themselves caught by the genitals and unable to free themselves. They became one with the plants and took root beside them; their fingers at once put forth shoots, tendrils grew all over them, and they too were on the point of bearing fruit. (623).<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> James Romm, in *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought*, devotes a good part of his study of the earth’s “edges” to what was to be expected beyond the Pillars of Hercules—the name is usually associated with the twin rocks standing astride the Straights of Gibraltar. Romm explains that “the Greek tradition of fabulous islands outside the Pillars of Hercules gradually developed into the Atlantis myth of Plato’s *Timaeus* and *Critias*; and once the notion of a spherical earth divided into climatic zones found acceptance, geographers started positing an alternate, habitable world to the south of the equator” (126-130). The Pillars of Hercules gradually became a symbol of a gateway or barrier between inner and outer worlds. James Romm refers to them as “a forbidding ‘non plus ultra,’ a warning to mariners not to proceed any further” (17).

<sup>41</sup> This description of plants bearing anthropomorphic features and sensibilities is in accord with Le Goff’s perception of the marvelous in medieval literature, according to which, “the marvelous was not content merely to surpass nature; there was something in it that was very anti-nature. The exaggeration and extravagance of marvelous creatures extended beyond the quantitative into the realm of the qualitative. Metamorphosis, one of the profound features of the marvelous, eludes characterization in terms of the devices used to produce simple ‘static’ marvels: accentuation, multiplication, association and distortion. In the Christian system marvels were scandalous because they transformed human beings created in God’s image, into animals” (41).

To escape the seduction of the vines, Lucian and crew sail off only to find themselves dangling in midair after a terrible storm that whirls the ship around, suspending it forty miles into the air. There, they discover an ethereal island (we later find out it is in fact the Moon) ruled by King Endymion, King of the Moon-dwellers, leads against Phaethon, ruler of the Sun-dwellers.<sup>42</sup> In detailed ekphrases that resemble Homeric descriptions, Lucian narrates in great detail the armies of both sides as they are preparing to launch into a mid-air battle, involving cloud-centaurs, horse vultures, horse-ants, and acorn-dogs.

[Endymion's] army numbered a hundred thousand, not counting baggage trains, engineers, infantry, or allied forces from elsewhere. Eighty thousand of these were Horse-vultures, twenty thousand were troops mounted on Vegetable-wings—another kind of bird, also very large, with vegetable shoots all over its body in place of plumage and quill feathers just like lettuce leaves. Next to those were the Millet-slingers and Garlic-fighters. Allies came to his assistance from the Great Bear also—thirty thousand Flea-archers and fifty thousand Wind-runners. (625).

Phaethon's army is described in equally detailed terms:

The enemy left wing was held by Phaeton with the Horse-ants. These are great beasts with wings, just like our ants except in size, for the biggest of them was two hundred feet long. It was not only their riders who fought; they themselves were very effective with their horns. [. . .] Close by them were drawn up the Stalk-

---

<sup>42</sup> Romm delves into the inspiration and the motives of Lucian to select the Moon as a terrain where the plot continues to unravel—"in sending his narrative out beyond the *oikoumene*, Lucian magnifies to immense proportions the ambiguities inherent in the explorer's log, revealing how easily it allows truth and fiction to change places with one another. Only in a fluid and fungible medium of this type could he find a safe haven for pure, imaginative prose-fiction, a genre which was otherwise neither recognized nor condoned by ancient literary critics" (214).

mushrooms, heavy-armed close fighters, ten thousand of them, so called because they used mushrooms as shields and asparagus stalks as spears. Near them were acorn-dogs, sent to Phaethon by the people of the Dog Star. There were five thousand of them, men with dogs' faces, fighting from winged acorns. It was reported that some of the enemy's allies also missed the battle—the slingers he sent for from the Milky Way, and the Cloud-centaurs. (624-25).

After the spectacular fight, the two parties work out a compromise in order to avoid the building of a wall that would separate the Sun from the Moon, and the terms of the peace are listed. While on the Moon, however, the men observe bizarre sexual practices that they record without passing criticism on their morality or lack of it, thereof: the “island” is populated only by men who give birth to offspring that are born from the calf of their leg. When growing old and helpless, Moon-dwellers do not die, but rather dissolve into the air like dust; their eyes, we learn, are removable and they all have large cabbages growing like tails over their buttocks; hair is considered repulsive—“to be beautiful in the Moon is to be bald and hairless: people with a thick head of hair they abominate” (628); and garments are particularly unusual—“the clothing of the rich is of soft glass; that of the poor of woven brass” (628).

The most fabulous of all the adventures in the narratives, however, occurs shortly after the crew has visited Lamptown, a place populated by talking lamps that live in fear of being put out. Terrified at the sight of the anthropomorphic lamps, the men sail out again in the open sea, only to be swallowed by a monstrous whale. While in the belly of the beast, they meet an elderly man from

Cyprus with his young son, also trapped inside the beast like Lucian. The men and Lucian spend two years in the belly of the whale, during which time they explore a thickly wooded area. At the end of the second year, however, the crew grows tired and decides to set the wood aflame in order to get the beast to open its mouth so they can escape in the open ocean. Their plan is successful and the narrator with his men spends their first few days in the open, on a white island, which we later learn is the island of milk, governed by the Nereid, Galatea.<sup>43</sup>

Their next stop is the Island of the Blessed, which, just like the description of the renowned realm in *AR*, also merits particular attention in the narrative—its wonders are narrated in an ekphrasis. “This city is made of gold throughout and has a wall of emerald around it. There are seven gates, each a single piece of cinnamon wood [ . . . ]; there are baths, also: great glass buildings with cinnamon burning inside, with warm dew instead of water in the actual troughs” (637). The description of the Island of the Blessed in this romance receives as lavish a narrative treatment as it does in *AR*. The island itself is surrounded by mystery and its inhabitants are heroes, legendary historical and pseudo-historical figures, and even deities.

Like the Elysian Fields and numerous descriptions of the Golden Age, the Island of the Blessed merged in antiquity with legend and folklore to form one extensive garden of delights, no longer subject to earthly laws. “[People] were

---

<sup>43</sup> Lucian’s reference to Aphrodite’s cult-image bears significant similarities with Ovid’s story of transformation, “Pygmalion and Galatea.” In book ten of *Metamorphosis* (lines 243 ff.), Ovid narrates the story of Pygmalion, son of Belus, who fell in love with Aphrodite. Because the goddess would not lie with him he made an ivory image of her and laid it in his bed, praying to her for pity. Entering into this image, Aphrodite brought it to life as Galatea, who bore him Paphus and Metharme. Paphus, Pygmalion’s successor, was the father of Cinyras, who founded the Cyprian city of Paphos and built the famous temple to Aphrodite there.

always in good spirits, kept their youthful appearance, and died peacefully in their sleep. The earth spontaneously produced an abundant harvest, while people lived peacefully in the midst of their riches. On the Island of the Blessed this *aurea aetas* was thought to flourish still” (Pleij 220). The island itself is a secluded utopia:

All kinds of flowers bloom in the land, and all kinds of plants are cultivated for their shade. The vines bear fruit twelve times a year, once a month. [. . .] There are three hundred and sixty-five springs of water around the city, as many again of money, and five hundred of perfume; these last are smaller. There are seven rivers of milk and eight of wine. [. . .] But the greatest inducement to happiness they have is the two springs near their table, that of Laughter and that of Pleasure. At the beginning of the banquet they all drink from both of these, and thereafter spend their hours laughing and enjoying themselves. (638-39).

On this island, the famous dead inhabitants—Ajax, Homer, Odysseus, Socrates, Aesop, Diogenes, and many others—engage in interesting discussions with Lucian and the crew, and have, like the Moon-dwellers, no inhibitions about their sexual practices.

They make love openly, in the sight of all, with both women and men; this [latter] is not considered in any way shameful. Only Socrates had sworn formally that his associations with the young were pure; but everybody thought he was guilty of perjury—Hyacinthus and Narcissus kept saying so, anyway, though he himself denied it. Women are common property, and no one is jealous of his neighbor; they are very Platonic in this respect.

Boys submit to anyone who wants them, without any resistance.  
(640).

After spending seven months with famous and notorious classical figures on the Island of the Blessed, Lucian sails off again bearing a letter this time from Odysseus to his beloved Calypso. On their way to Ogygia, however, the men stop at the Island of Dreams, a small isle on which Sleep rules, having under his power two satraps: Nightmare, the son of Pointless, and Richman, the son of Daydream. Winked dreams, monster dreams, sweet dreams, and all kinds of visions inhabit the isle that Lucian and the men enjoy immensely.<sup>44</sup>

The next stop of the narrator is Ogygia, where Lucian dutifully delivers Odysseus' letter to Calypso and learns of Odysseus' regret of ever leaving her island, accompanied with a promise of returning to her once he devises his escape from the Isle of the Blessed. The men accept Calypso's generous hospitality, and rest on the island for a few days before sailing off again for unknown lands.

After departing from Ogygia, Lucian and the crew ride a storm for two days at the end of which they are attacked by Pumpkin-pirates and their ship is subsequently capsized by a monstrous halcyon bird. The men find themselves

---

<sup>44</sup> Dreams are naturally a part of the religious machinery of romance, as they were of the ancient world at large, but the authors of the Greek novelistic romances use them in a variety of ways. For example, "Daphnis and Chloe have simultaneous visions telling them to bring up the children as mere peasants like themselves, contrary to their high-flown ambitions. It is thus established that a symmetrical sort of Providence is in charge; but Longus uses the occasion for an aside on the greed of the peasants (Longus I. vii. 1-viii. 1) [. . .] Heliodorus is the master manipulator: Charicleia's stepfather dreams that she is being snatched away by an eagle; the person who really intends to arrange the snatching gives an interesting interpretation of the dream to put his mind at ease—and it turns out to be correct in the long run, since it still equates the eagle with the fiancée as bridegroom, rather than with the eloper whom the dream most obviously portends. Heliodorus' Providence will not work in an open way if it can be made to move in a mysterious one (Heliodorus IV. XIV. 2-xv.1)" (Anderson 79).

swimming in the open sea and observe a truly miraculous occurrence: “the goose that formed our figurehead suddenly flapped its wings and cackled; our navigator Scintharus, who was bold, grew hair; and, the oddest of all, the ship’s mast began to sprout, putting forth shoots and, at the top, fruit—figs and black grapes, not yet ripe. We were understandably very perturbed at this sight and prayed to the gods because of the strange nature of the apparition” (646). They eventually manage to save themselves and their ship and lift it high enough, over the trees that separate them from the open sea—“sailing through the wood,” as they claim—and encounter a new island, inhabited by savage Ox-heads, the ruler of which is a fearsome Minotaur.

The narrator concludes his adventures with one last stop on the island of Witchcraft, an island inhabited only by beautiful women, all wearing garments that trail around their ankles. Shortly after the description of the enchanted isle, it is revealed that the women are not women, or female at all, but creatures called Donkey-legs, as they have hooves instead of feet. Lucian ends his narrative rather abruptly, promising to relate the rest of his adventures of the ‘other’ continent in “the books that follow” (649).<sup>45</sup> Lucian, of course, never wrote them, and this is perhaps the biggest lie of all. In spite of his false promise, his writings remained unsurpassed in the Middle Ages, probably because “travel parody and dreamland description had developed into a permanent subgenre of satirical literature,

---

<sup>45</sup> Most of the monster races presented both in *AR* and *TS* also feature in Pliny’s *Natural History*. Anthropomorphic creatures with monstrous features such as the sciapods (with one leg and one large foot), the acephaloids (with no head and facial features in the chest), the cynocephaloids, or dog-headed people were thought to exist at the fringes of the inhabited world, in Ethiopia, in the East, and in the Hyperborean lands. In Pliny’s work a different breed of monsters is also mentioned—those thought to be the product of humans breeding with animals, and those very creatures feature in Lucian’s work.

generally taking the form of farce, mock sermons, and tall tales in general” (Pleij 285).

To travel is consciously to confront the “Other.” Even when one travels home, as long as one is still in the mode of being a traveler, one sees home as a place to be visited, as “a somewhere else.” When writing about travel, thus, the authors of the Greek novelistic romances reinterpreted and reintegrated the “Other” which they had seen into terms comprehensible to their reading community. In effect, travel-writing, is always an act of cultural appropriation, and this becomes evident in the travel-narrative of the Greek novelistic romances.

Although writers like the anonymous author of *AR*, Lucian and Antonius Diogenes attempted from time to time to naturalize foreign traditions in order to open a door for the people of their own world to some understanding (however inadequate and partial) of another world which they did not know. Despite the attempt to naturalize, however, travel-writing and the genre of the Greek novelistic romance in particular could not afford to let the “Other” become wholly known, for the “Other” to maintain its attraction and to generate the desire of readers to purchase books about the far away, the “Other” must remain forever other. “Through the use of marvels,” Biow argues, “[medieval travel writers] and epic poets expose themselves to be masterful manipulators of signs that signify nothing referentially real, yet deceptively enchant the audience. At the same time, as epic poets reveal themselves through their talk of marvels to be highly skilled makers entertaining a public with captivating lies, they also begin to resemble the

confident person who likewise makes a practice of telling mesmerizing, fabulous tales” (4).

In both the Greek novelistic romances and in the Byzantine revival of the genre, the Greek writers introduce numerous descriptions of explicit monstrosities and sexual practices ranging from the romantic and exotic to the bizarre and grotesque, yet those are confined either in uncivilized terrains that exist in the fringes of the world (in the Greek novelistic romances) or in dreams, and imagining enclosed terrains. Like the *mirabilia* depicted in the marginalia of gothic manuscripts, Hellenistic marvels tend to be placed in lands just on or beyond the edge of the world. “Nature, in other words, deviates from the norm where it is given freer reign beyond the dominant point of view and power structures of a given culture. At the same time, this freedom ensues the production creatures whose bodies are marvelous and who reflect a seemingly anarchic breakdown of familiar categories in alien, though not necessarily hostile, body politics” (Biow 6).

Lucian begins his *TS* much as Diogenes had ended *WT*, by openly discussing his intentions for his work and by telling his audience how to receive it. Lucian’s romance bears close affinities in subject-matter and narrative details of wondrous otherworlds with the work of Antonius Diogenes, which survives only in Photius’ summary and some papyrus scraps.<sup>46</sup> Photius begins with a brief

---

<sup>46</sup> Tomas Haag offers a concise summary and analysis of the novel as it exists today, thanks to Photius’ recording of the long-lost original (Photius was the 9<sup>th</sup> century patriarch of Constantinople who ran a reading circle. Members read various works of literature which they summarized for the benefit of the others and these summaries and commentaries were in turn recorded by Photius for his absent brother). Haag’s study includes some valuable observations regarding the original work of Antonius Diogenes. The narrative of Antonius Diogenes “originally consisted of no less than twenty-four books, which means that it was presumably at least double the size of Heliodorus’ *Aithiopia*. Its structure is complicated, with one

commentary on the narrative and stylistic form of Diogenes' composition, declaring it "uncluttered and so pure that there is no lack of clarity even in its digressions" (777). Photius' comments seem to amount to nothing more than excessive praise for a narrative work that, even in a summary, appears too intricate and confusing to be appreciated. With regards to the subject matter of Diogenes' narrative, Photius extends his high praise noting that even though the mythical and the incredible are characteristic of the narrative, they appear as altogether credible, "in the contrivance and elaboration of the episodes" (777). One wonders how believable and credible Diogenes had made Decryllis' visit to Hades appear in his original composition and if clear and "uncluttered" narrative was sufficient to convince readers of the validity of the episodes and wonders narrated.

Decryllis, the Tyrian heroine in *WT* (quite boldly) claims not only to have seen Hades, but also to "have learned much about it, making use of her personal maidservant Myrto as her informant; Myrto had died long ago and returned from the dead to instruct her mistress" (778). Photius' defense of such fictional accounts is no different than Homer's intent for the detailed narration of Odysseus

---

first-person narrative within the other, like a set of Chinese boxes. Unfortunately, Photius' summary, which is less than ten pages in all, does not permit of any exact reconstruction of the work, but something can be said" (118).

As far as the dating of the composition of the original novels of Antonius Diogenes is concerned, Gerald N. Sandy, the translator of *The Wonders Beyond Thule* in Reardon's *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, provides his own dating information based on textual clues. "Some time close to the middle of the third century A.D. the Neoplatonist Porphyry cites (Antonius) Diogenes and his work by name in his biography of Pythagoras, thereby providing one of the only two pieces of evidence for the time of composition of the romance. Antonius Diogenes' pretense that Alexander the Great played a part in transmitting the documents that served as the basis of the work provides the other chronological indicator as it points to a date later than the last third of the fourth century B.C. The Latin name Antonius suggests an imperial date, however; and if, as has been argued, Lucian's *True Story* parodies Antonius Diogenes' work, then a date of composition in the first century and a half A.D. is most likely" (775).

adventures in the underworld and the adventurous travels of the hero in the fringes of the known world. Credibility was evidently secondary to good story telling; as Strabo observes, Homer, much like Diogenes, “had wanted to place the wanderings of Odysseus in the western Mediterranean region, but held off from this plan, both because he did not know the area in any detail, and because he preferred to push his episodes outward (*exagein*) toward the more striking and the more fabulous (*to deinoteron kai to teratodesteron*)” (Romm 186).

Decryllis’ traveling accounts, much like those of the other Hellenistic protagonists, also involve her experiences with peculiar peoples of the north whose features and traditions bear only superficial similarities with familiar Tyrian traditions and models. She also reports numerous teratological marvels, claiming to have encountered fabulous animals, monstrous races of men, and bizarre properties of springs, rivers, winds, and weather.<sup>47</sup> In one country she meets people who can see well at night, yet are completely blind in the daytime, and finds matriarchy practiced widely, as women work the fields and men tend to the needs of the household.

Apparent death and resurrection are as prominent in this tale as they are popular and widespread in the plots of most Greek novelistic romances. “All these things and many more like them,” Photius admits, “their burial and return from the grave, Mantinias’ love affairs and their consequences, and other similar

---

<sup>47</sup> James Romm comments extensively on the fictitious nature of Decryllis’s accounts, relating them to Greek and Roman navigational and geographical knowledge and misconceptions. The heroine’s accounts of her voyages are so fictitious,” Romm argues, that they “seem to have been set up in such a way as to focus on these wonders rather than on the experiences and development of the central human characters. The episode of Decryllis’s visit to the Acutanoi, accompanied by her brother’s friends Ceryllus and Astraeus, provides a good example of how Diogenes has used *paradoxa* as the nuclei of his plot” (207).

events on the island of Thule—Dinias is presented recounting one after the other on the authority of Decryllis for the Arcadian Cympas” (780). It is not, however, until the summary of the twenty-fourth book of Diogenes that historical figures and pseudo-historical accounts of battles become inextricably intertwined with pure fiction and geographical marvels. As Dinias with two other men (Carmanes and Meniscus) extends his journey “beyond Thule,” he witnesses a number of marvels: they arrive in Arctic regions “where the night may last a month, six months, or even a whole year, and the day is of the same length. At last he gets so far north that he reaches the moon, but at this stage Photius’ patience runs out: he simply refuses to report what fabulous things Antonius Diogenes has to tell of his visit” (Haag 120).

Aside from this detailed “eyewitness” account of the arctic regions, there is an explicit “story” that ties all these accounts to a historical figure, making the work almost as credible as the person who is claimed to have discovered it—Alexander the Great. Dinias, determined to record all these fabulous stories and pass them down to people who would like to learn from them, asks Cymbas’ companion, Erasinides, to write them down in two copies: one is to be taken to his native country, where people are eager to share in his knowledge, and the other will be placed in his grave, in a secured box. This final copy (the one that Diogenes also seems to have relied on) was discovered by Alexander the Great himself when he conquered Tyre. “On the box was written ‘Stranger, whoever you are, open this box to learn what will amaze you.’ On opening the box,

Alexander and his companions found the cypress tablets that, it seems, Decryllis had buried at Dinias' orders" (782).

Both *TS* and *WT* are highly innovative and imaginative literary works of prose-fiction that often take the form of an explorer's log, only that in the case of these two Greek novelistic romances the travel-log is based on purely fictitious material.<sup>48</sup> The plots of *TS* and *WT*, not unlike the narrative incidents that unravel in the other Greek novelistic romances, rely entirely on exaggerated, fantastic events and the protagonists are the victims of numerous sinister circumstances over which they have little or no control. Sea voyages are also a standard feature of the other Greek novelistic romances (those principally dealing with the separation of a pair of lovers), but they function there chiefly as a plot-vehicle rather than as the governing model of the literary form. These pseudo-historical voyages also confine themselves to the known world, instead of venturing into the unknown.<sup>49</sup>

Evidently, the Greek novelistic romances deal with what we would call "the miraculous" or "the fantastic" and with excursions into strange worlds, with more than a hint of "romance." Aside from exhibiting elements found in both

---

<sup>48</sup> Despite the fictitious nature of these accounts, it is appropriate here to mention the impact such travelogues had on the development of future exploration, both geographical and literary. Frank Manuel notes, "geographical discovery helped to make utopia plausible, as strange lands were penetrated, the windows of credibility were opened wide. Authentic narratives about new nations and kingdoms with hitherto unheard of customs were in themselves so marvelous that they lent verisimilitude to the imaginary utopia, however wild it may be. The boundary line between real and unreal, possible and impossible, faded" (82).

<sup>49</sup> James Romm also notes that the titles of both romances—*TS* and *WT*—do not follow the title pattern of the other novelistic romances—*LC*, *CC*—"but instead [they are marked by] the teratological 'wonders' or *apista* that dangled like exotic beads from every thread of [their] plot line." (205) "In fact," the author continues, "this unique title [*WT*] brings the work more into the tradition of paradoxography, the genre which specialized in collecting pseudo-scientific exotica, than that of the novel" (205).

genres—novel and romance—the Greek novelistic romances bear close affinities with geographic and pseudo-geographic treatises, ethnographic satires—a form of social criticism where idealized peoples are made to mock “advanced” Mediterranean culture—and even the genre of paradoxography.<sup>50</sup> It is not easy to trace how some of these elements emerged and then subsequently developed, sometimes even in spawning literary genres, yet one thing is certain: they have found their rightful place into the novelistic romances, contributing an unusual, yet popular, literary and generic medley.

The writers of the Greek novelistic romances used a cluster of literary devices whose function was to win the reader’s belief in the fictions narrated in the novel. For example, some Greek novelistic romances bear titles which are historiographical in form: *Aithiopeka*, *Ephesiaca*, *Babyloniaca*, could, and did serve as titles for both novels and histories. Within these romances, the represented world is, without exception, explicitly identified with reality, and the openings of the narratives of the five extant romances offer proof of this: “The Syracusan general Hermocrates, the man who defeated the Athenians, had a daughter called Callirhoe” (Chariton); “Among the most influential citizens of Ephesus was a man called Lycomedes” (Xenophon of Ephesus); “I was born at Tyre in Phoenicia” (Achilles Tatius); “There’s a city in Lesbos called Mytilene”

---

<sup>50</sup>The Greek historian Plutarch comments on the ever-growing difficulty he had recording events that are accurate and sound, in *Parallel Lives*, noting that reason and empirical evidence often prove inadequate in helping him distinguish between fable and history. “Just as geographers, O Socius Senecio, crowd on to the outer edges of their maps the parts of the earth which elude their knowledge, with explanatory notes the ‘What lies beyond is sandy desert without water and full of wild beasts,’ or ‘blind march,’ or ‘Scythian cold,’ or ‘frozen sea,’ so in the writing of my *Parallel Lives*, now that I have traversed those periods of time which are accessible to probable reasoning and which afford basis for a history dealing with facts, I might well say of the earlier periods: ‘What lies beyond is full of marvels and unreality, a land of poets and fabulists, of doubt and obscurity’ ” (*Theseus*, translated by Bernadette Perrin, 3).

(Longus); and “the smile of daybreak was just beginning to brighten the sky, the sunlight to catch the hilltops, when a group of men in brigand gear peered over the mountain that overlooks the place where the Nile flows into the sea at the mouth that men call the Heracleotic” (Heliodorus).<sup>51</sup> J. R. Morgan, in “Make-Believe and Make Believe,” reaffirms the great lengths the writers of the Greek novelistic went to preserve this pseudo-realism in the narrative of their romances:<sup>52</sup>

Where the world depicted corresponds to areas within the likely experience of the readership, the novelists stay close to familiar reality. The hardships of rural life, procedures of betrothal and marriage, the legalities of selling slaves, the role of slaves in the economy all have been studied in relation to the novels, with the conclusion that fiction is close enough to social reality to be useful as evidence of it. Likewise, dreams, while forming a staple of conventional plot building, are nonetheless conceived and handled very much in conformity with contemporary theory and belief. (201).

In the Byzantine romances of both the Komnenian and the Palaiologan periods allegory becomes the literary vehicle of appropriation; through allegory and symbolism, the barbaric and pagan worlds of the Greek novelistic romances are infiltrated with Christian doctrines that justify their very presence and purpose in these romances. Arthur Heiserman’s keen observations of the literary interplay

---

<sup>51</sup> See Reardon’s *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, pages: 22 for Chariton’s *CC*, 128 for Xenophon’s *ET*, 178 for Achilles Tatius’s *LC*, 289 for Longus’s *Daph.*, and 353 for Heliodorus’ *Aith.*

<sup>52</sup> Morgan’s article is published in *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World*, Christopher Gill and T. P. Wiseman, eds., 1993.

between romance and allegory are particularly illuminating:

Flawless characters easily become, or seem to readers to become, emblems of virtue and embodiments of grace; if their suffering does not sufficiently engage us, their very hollowness can, like a vacuum, draw from us speculations about what the suffering means and what the characters stand for. Repeated dangers and escapes can also seem to manifest some moral or divine principle at work in the world, a beneficent principle that rewards virtue with victory over evil and death. Moreover, characters and authors themselves often speculate about the meaning of it all, usually in moments of crisis and choice. Malevolent Fortune governs human life, they say. Wanton Eros governs human life. Isis, Artemis, Aphrodite, and the rest can protect their suffering devotees. (183).

Le Goff, along the same lines, observes that in the Christian system marvels were often perceived as scandalous because they transformed human beings created in God's image into animals and beasts. As a result, the marvelous (*mirabilis*) that formed much of the substance of secular Greek and Roman literature was transformed and appropriated into the miraculous (*admirabilis*), finding its role into sacred or Christian Greek texts.

The manifestation of the marvelous and the supernatural in the Byzantine romances of the Komnenian and Palaiologan periods differs significantly from the violent and grotesque incidents that direct the narrative flow of the Greek novelistic romances, yet it remains prominent under a Christianized guise. Although the Byzantine romances are set in a pagan, non-specific, ancient or late-antique world, "motifs such as battle, capture by pirates, banquets, however

traditional they may be, are sometimes embroidered with details from a contemporary world, which thus constitute more or less successfully camouflaged anachronisms” (Hagg 75). For instance, many of the intimate scenes between hero and heroine are enacted in a dream or in a walled garden, which often stands quite ambiguous—its very existence is questioned.

In *HH*, Hysminias’s passion for the heroine is expressed in a dream, even though he has had several chances to profess his love and passion to her. “‘Well’, the hero declares, ‘the girl flew at once from my arms, or to speak more properly my arms fell sluggishly and feebly from the girl. And sleep fled at once from my eyes, and by Love! I was so annoyed to lose such a lovely dream and be torn away from my dear Hysmine’” (Γ. 7. 12-14).<sup>53</sup> In the Byzantine romances the psychological dimension of the protagonists is deepened and their emotions are worth exploring in a literary work. Also, unprotected locations such as forests, the wilderness, and the fringes of the known then world were by definition dangerous and therefore not fit as settings for the verse Byzantine romances; much action could take place within cities, gardens, walled locations, where the focus would be exclusively on the feelings and emotional torments and growth of the hero and heroine.<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup> The romance in its original Greek is available in Marcovich’s edition. “Ἐυθὺς οὖν ἐξεπτῆ μου τῶν χειρῶν ἢ οὐδεποτε πεπονθα. Ἐυθὺς οὖν ἐξεπτῆ μου τῶν χειρῶν ἢ κορῆ, ἢ μαλλὸν εἶπειν οἰκειότερον εἶναι νωθρῶς οὕτω καὶ μαλακῶς τῆς κορῆς ἐξεπεσον. Ἐξεπτῆ δὲ μου καὶ ὁ ὑπνὸς τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν, καὶ ἠνιωμῆν νῆ τον Ἐρωτᾶ οὕτω κάλον ἀπολεσᾶς οὐνεῖρον καὶ τῆς ἐμῆς φίλης Ὑσμίνης ἀποσπασθεῖς. Καὶ ἠθελὸν παλιν ὑπνοῦν καὶ τι πασχεῖν ἐρωτικόν, οἷον καθ’ ὑπνοῦς ἐπαθόν” (31).

<sup>54</sup> “The medieval forest,” that was also equated with wilderness in the medieval mind, “served as a frontier, a refuge for pagan cults and hermits ‘who came looking for the desert,’ as well as for those defeated in war and those who lived on the fringes of society: fugitive serfs, murderers, soldiers of fortune and brigands” (Le Goff 53-54). Le Goff also makes a very important distinction nature and culture, both of which helped

Unlike the Greek novelistic romances, in the Byzantine romances,<sup>55</sup> most wondrous events occur within the grounds of walled gardens, castles, minor protected enclosures within city limits, dreams, and within the lovers themselves.<sup>56</sup> Le Goff notes that the repression of dreams in medieval romance, like the repression of sexuality was the work of the Church, “and we are not entirely liberated from its consequences” (228). Historically, dreams and fears have gone hand in hand. According to Le Goff, “because the dream was seen as an instrument of the devil, it became part of the syndrome of ‘*contemptus mundi*’ or rejection of the world, so tirelessly elaborated by the monks of the early Middle Ages” (228). The dreams described in the Komnenian and Palaiologan romances make artful use of the *oneiric* motif to offer an escape to the realm of the supernatural and wondrous, where all desires, wishes, and unrealistic expectations stand a chance to materialize.

In *BC*, early into the narrative, Belthandros leaves the real world and temporarily dwells into a realm of marvels—first he comes upon a stream that

---

shape the novelistic and the Byzantine romances. “In the Middle Ages the great contrast was not, as it had been in antiquity between the city and the country (*urbs* and *rus*, as Romans put it) but between nature and culture, expressed in terms of the opposition between what was essentially wild (the ocean, the forest, the western equivalents of the eastern desert), that is, between men who lived in groups and those who lived in solitude” (58-59).

<sup>55</sup> Roderick Beaton argues that the Byzantine romances written between the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> century belong to a continuous and evolving literary tradition. “‘Revival’,” he claims, “is certainly the word for [the Byzantine romances]: the four romances of the period are packed with literary allusions and witty parodies for those in the know. And these stories of ideal love too, just like their predecessors from late antiquity, are set in a distant pagan world before the coming of either Christianity or the Byzantine Empire. But to revive an art form so long defunct is not the act of passive reflection or imitation that it has often been taken to be. In giving new life to a dead art form the Byzantine writers of the twelfth century were scarcely less innovative than the anonymous enthusiasts who gave written form to the oral tales of *Digenes*. And one of the ways in which that can be seen is by noticing the ways in which the twelfth century romances allude not just to their ancient predecessors, but also to the near-contemporary *Digenes*” (Littlewood 86).

<sup>56</sup> Hagg’s study of the narrative of the Byzantine romances relates the first person narrative of these verse romances to the hero / narrator’s intentional attempt to blend dream and reality.

contains a band of fire within its current. Upon following the stream, he finds a sumptuous castle and on its gate of adamant the hero reads an inscription declaring that the man who has never felt the pains of love will immediately suffer them a hundred thousand-fold if he succeeds in entering: “Εἰς μεσον δε ετηρησε γραμματα κεκομμενα, / ελεγον δε τα γραμματα τα λαξευτοτημενα: / ‘ Τον ουκ εφθασαν τον ποτε τα βελη των Ερωτων, / μυριοχιλιοκαταδαρτων / ευθυς να του ποιησουν, / οστις το Ερωτοκαστρον απεσω να το ιδη” (106).<sup>57</sup>

Once the hero steps into the castle that he later learns is the abode of Eros, a world of marvels and supernatural phenomena unravels. The interior of the castle is described in lengthy ekphrases and is evidently enchanted. The hero finds statues and automata, and rooms richly painted and decorated. On the walls he observes two bands of reliefs—the lower one shows men and women tortured by cupids, whereas the upper one displays a group of people in a state of happiness. The men and women represented are labeled with their names and some details of their history. Among the statues in the ornate banqueting hall, however, are two that prove to be the sources of the mysterious river outside: from the eyes of a carved peacock held in the hand of a sapphire statue pours a stream of tears that becomes the river; close to it stands a male statue, the heart of which is struck by a dart. From the wound pours a stream of fire, which mingles

---

<sup>57</sup> “These engraved letters proclaimed: the man never touched by the shafts of the cupids will straightway be subjected to ten million woes by them when he sees Love’s castle from the inside” (Betts 9-10).

with the tears of the other statue to produce the strange river of mingled water and fire that Belthandros has been following.

Shortly after this phenomenon, the hero is approached by Eros himself, who announces a beauty contest for the next day and reveals to him the woman (who is no other but Chrysantza, the heroine) with whom he is destined to fall in love, but vanishes abruptly, 'like in a dream'.<sup>58</sup> In spite of Eros' promises, however, two whole years pass before hero and heroine reunite and profess their love for one another; Belthandros, overhearing the heroine's sighs of longing in a walled garden, jumps the wall and the two spend the night together.

The motifs of the fortified castle and the walled garden play an important role again in *KC* and in most Komnenian and Palaiologan romances.

Kallimachos, the hero, enters the enchanted castle that belongs to a ferocious ogre and finds its interior apparently deserted and opulently furnished. While admiring a painted ceiling of the heavens, the hero's gaze is drawn downwards, toward the nude female figure of indescribable beauty, hanging suspended by the hair. The girl's captor, the ogre, whose castle it turns out to be, appears and beats his victim mercilessly before the eyes of the hero, who has been hiding in a silver basin.

Kallimachos eventually manages to kill the ogre thanks to a tip from the girl, and

---

<sup>58</sup> Dreams and their interpretation were a matter of particular perplexity and anxiety for Byzantine peoples and Christians in general. "Beginning in the fourth century when Christianity became the dominant religion and ideology in the West, and continuing during the subsequent transitional period known as late antiquity or the Early Middle Ages, dreams and their interpretation, important matters in many societies, became cultural phenomena with which Christians had to deal" (Le Goff 193). In the Byzantine romances, dreams often interrupt the flow of the narrative and allow for the impossible, the supernatural, and the wondrous to materialize even temporarily and resurrect the repressed desires of the protagonists.

Chrysorrhoe, relieved from danger, gets a chance to thank her savior and introduces herself.

In the course of the narrative hero and heroine are separated and it is revealed that Chrysorrhoe is held captive in a palace surrounded by a garden, where a meadow is constantly filled and refilled in order to the fire of her obstinacy. “Όταν εκ πονου και κλαθμου λιποθυμηση, πεση, / ει μη ην φθαση το νερον, ποσως ουκ αναφερει. / Οι ταχα γουν παρηγοροι και φυλακες της κορης / μετα μεθοδου το νερον εποικασιν να τρεχη. / Απλως αν ειδες τον κλαθμον και θρηνον τον της κορης, / να φριξης!” (60).<sup>59</sup>

The hero enters the walled enclosure disguised and manages to reunite with the heroine, but the two cannot live in the garden ‘happily ever after,’ since it is an artificial locale that nurtures only temporary pleasures.

In *LR* the wondrous and the supernatural are manifested in the motifs of the walled garden, the enchanted castle, and Eros the King. Libistros first hears of the power of love after an incident while hunting and the same night he dreams that he is surrounded by winked and armed cupids who lead him before the throne of Eros, ruler of a palace and a domain peopled by allegorical figures. Eros accepts the hero’s submission and declares that he is fated to serve love and marry Rhodamne, daughter of King Chrysos, of the Castle of Silver and before he awakes, the whole course of his adventures has been prophesied to him. This dream is followed yet by another, in which the hero dreams that Eros introduces

---

<sup>59</sup> “After she faints and drops from her trouble and tears, she only recovers when water is brought, and those guarding and comforting her have a devise to supply it. Just to see the lady’s tears and laments would frighten you” (Betts 68).

him to Rhodamne; so great is his erotic excitement, though, that he awakes before he can embrace her. In both romances—*LR* and *KC*—the hero is introduced to the heroine through the allegorical figure of Eros the King; the introduction takes place within the walls of an enchanted castle, and the hero is not quite certain of the actual existence of the heroine since right after her introduction, the hero awakes from “the dream.”

In the *Tale of Troy* [*TT*], in a strange anachronism, the beautiful heroine, Helen, is kept in a lovely castle on an unspecified island, as opposed to the historically accurate city of Sparta. There the heroes of the world go by land and by sea to court her and praise her beauty. Menelaos prevails among the heroes in wooing Helen, but no sooner is he married to her, that he has to depart on an expedition. Paris, in the meantime, in the guise of a monk, enters the castle and manages to impress the retainers there by his courtly feats of arms. Before long, however, within the walls of the castle he and Helen have fallen in love, and they live clandestinely as man and wife of the castle. Helen’s pregnancy soon betrays them, however, and to avoid execution, the couple escapes by sea and turns up shortly afterwards, back to Troy. After the union of the lovers, a setback common to most Byzantine romances occurs: the Greeks prepare for an expedition against Troy, and the fates of Paris and Helen are overshadowed by larger events.

The narrative of *Digenes Akrites* [*DA*] follows a similar literary treatment of the walled castle and its protected garden. After he has distinguished himself in battle, Digenes decides to settle down in a sumptuous palace with a garden (described in an ekphrasis) by the river Euphrates. Here, not long afterwards, he

dies, apparently young, of natural causes. Digenes' choice to build the palace of his dreams by Euphrates is by no means coincidental. Pleij, in his study of medieval paradisiacal realms, notes that, "the Tigris, Euphrates, Nile, and Ganges (sometimes also Donau) were thought to represent the four rivers of Paradise. The closer one came to their source, the closer one was to paradise, and the richer the harvest of spices, precious stones, and gold" (256). Pleij's claim is well substantiated in the *Digenes* romance where the poet provides a detailed description of the natural beauty and riches that are characteristic of the palace of the hero features. "He chose to make his dwelling by Euphrates. / This was the fairest river of them all, / Having this source from the Great Paradise, / Wherefore he has a very fragrant sweetness, / And a coldness of freshly melted snow. / From that same river having channeled water, / He planted there another pleasant paradise, / A strange grove good indeed for eyes to look on" (217), and also, "Amid this wondrous pleasant paradise / The noble Borderer raised a pleasant dwelling" (219).<sup>60</sup> Such idealized enclosed locations are as close as the Byzantine writers dared get to the kingdom of heaven through secular means—"a Christian utopia, in the sense of an ideal state to be attained in human life, is impossible: if it were possible it would be the kingdom of heaven, and trying to realize it on earth would be the chief end of man" (Manuel 35).

---

<sup>60</sup> Pleasure gardens found on the grounds of castles and in the gardens of heroes and heroines did not remain a mere literary construct. "Humanists created gardens as allegorizing commentary on the act of creation, for the purpose of comprehending it better, which however did nothing to detract from their attractiveness as places in which to pass time and dally with lovers. At this time there also arose more worldly—perhaps more aptly described as earthly—variants in the form of zoological gardens and pleasure parks. [. . .] Zoological gardens exhibited exotic species in paradisiacal surroundings, which meant not only amid a profusion of flowers and greenery but also in peaceful symbiosis. Moreover, taking in these could be passed off as an idle pastime, indulged in with no thought to the pressing needs of everyday life" (Pleij 23).

Ogres and dragons make their appearance in the otherworld realms of the Greek romances in the late Byzantine period and add a unique touch of suspense and fear. The presence of the dragon in *DA* and the Ogre in *KC* are by no means coincidental. A fairly large number of fragmented iconographic depictions (plates) of the Digenes hero discovered in Athens and Corinth, portray him slaying a dragon.<sup>61</sup> On a fragment of a plate of the late 12<sup>th</sup> or very early 13<sup>th</sup> century, Alison Frantz reveals, is preserved part of a man and a dragon. In the dragon's neck are five arrows or darts, and "although the picture fits no episode in the epic, it does coincide closely with a description in the song of an exploit in which Akritas slew a dragon with five arrows, which would seem to be taken as darts, or alternately that he killed him with bow and arrow" (87). Both Frantz and Henri Gregoire agree the iconographic depiction of Digenes (on pottery) and his exploits suggest that the hero was a favorite subject with Byzantine potters, who would reasonably be supposed to be familiar with his exploits.

It has also been claimed by Gregoire as well as Notopoulos that the mythological scenes of the Byzantine romance are of particular interest and importance, since they add validity to the assumption that the Byzantine world was more suffused with magic and the supernatural than the Homeric. The Byzantine world, Notopoulos argues, inherited from classical myth the theme of a god or hero slaying a monster, and later adapted it for its saints and for the *DA*

---

<sup>61</sup> For more information on the results of the excavations see Alison Frantz, "Digenes Akritas: A Byzantine Epic and Its Illustrations" *Byzantion* XV (1941): 83 –103; and Henri Gregoire, *Διγενής Ακρίτας: Η Βυζαντινή Εποποιία στην Ιστορία και την Ποίηση*. New York: *The National Herald*, 1942.

romance: “the classical world,” Notopoulos explains, “left its influence on the plates in the form of centaurs and harpies, themes which are also found in other phases of Byzantine art. The interest in Christian themes was satisfied more in ikons and church-paneling, hence we have few instances of them in the plates” (19).

Anthropologists have revealed that “blessed isles” and “paradises” are part of the dreamworld of “savages” everywhere. Exotic descriptions of far-off lands and stories about imaginary heavens of delight are by no means uncommon among the Chinese, the Japanese, the Hindus, and the Arabs, but the profusion of western Greco-Byzantine utopias has not been equaled by any other culture. In the medieval Greek romances of the Hellenistic and Byzantine periods we encounter a plurality of utopias, paradisiacal terrains, sinister otherworlds, and barbaric eastern territories, the detailed descriptions of which account for much of the action and diachronic appeal of these romances.

Detailed descriptions of exotic, idealized terrains feature in both the Greek novelistic romances and in their Byzantine counterparts. They usually appear isolated, although still in the main narrative, (in detailed ekphrases that interrupt the flow of the narrative often for a few hundred lines), establishing a secure link between the impossible and the sublime. The manifestation of these utopian realms takes different guises in the two genres. In the Greek novelistic romances utopian realms are associated with locations that exist on the fringes of the world where distortions, monstrosities, and mysterious phenomena are the norm. In this unpredictable, often threatening, world the protagonists simply exist as travelers,

and although affected directly by the uncertainties that surround them, they are able to account for the multitude of violent incidents and trials they are made to endure.<sup>62</sup>

In the Byzantine romances, on the other hand, the adventurous voyages and trials of the hero and heroine, all justified in the name of love that consumes both, revolve around the protagonists' emotions, confusions, and uncertainties. The manifestation of their passions—emotional, sexual, and even hallucinatory—often take place in enclosed locations such as walled gardens, castles, and similar realms, the interior of which is always endowed with marvelous and supernatural qualities.<sup>63</sup> Such enclosed terrains are secured from the harsh social realities and within their bounds the impossible and the unreal stand a chance to materialize.

---

<sup>62</sup> The vastly expanded world of the Hellenistic and Roman times had much to do with the anxieties, uncertainties, and continuous fear of the future that the protagonists of the Greek novelistic romances experience. Perry, in *The Ancient Romances*, insists that during the Hellenistic period “the individual lost nearly all his quondam importance and representative significance, having become too tiny to be tragic, or heroic, or poetic, or symbolical, or anything more than himself or a particular segment of contemporary society. [. . .] The bigger the world the smaller the man. Faced with the immensity of things and his own helplessness before them, the spirit of Hellenistic man became passive in a way that it had never been before, and regarded himself instinctively as the plaything of fortune” (48).

<sup>63</sup> “The age of Greek romance,” Perry states in *The Ancient Romances*, “was similar to that of the modern novel in the centering of thought and feeling about the private concerns of the individual man apart from society, and the tendency to look outward in a spirit of wonder upon the endless varieties of nature and human experience, rather than inward to the nature of man in his more universal or more heroic aspects” (7).

## CHAPTER IV

## Utopias or Dystopias? Considering the Sinister Twist

This man I had was simple, crude fellow—a character fit to bear true witness; for clever people observe more things and more curiously, but they interpret them; and to lend weight and conviction to their interpretation, they cannot help altering history a little. They never show things as they are, but bend and disguise them according to the way they have seen them; and to give credence to their judgment and attract you to it, they are prone to add something to their matter, to stretch it out and amplify it. We need a man either very honest or so simple that he has not the stuff to build up false inventions and give them plausibility; and wedded to no theory. Such was my man.

Montaigne, “Of Cannibals” (1578-80)<sup>1</sup>

What to believe, in the course of his reading, was Mr. Boffin’s chief literary difficulty indeed; for some time he was divided in his mind between half, all, or none; at length, when he decided, as a moderate man, to compound with half, the question still remained, which half? And that stumbling-block he never got over.

Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (1865)<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> No writer was more strongly moved to view his own society from a new perspective in the light of reports brought back of the habits of the natives of the “New World” than Michael Montaigne. The translation of Montaigne’s essay “On Cannibals” is by Donald M. Frame; see *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*, Stanford University Press (1995).

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Boffin’s grave confusion regarding the flux bounds of the factual appears as prominent in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century as it was in the Hellenistic times. The reader of the adventure-packed plot of the Greek novelistic romances must have confronted similar problems when faced with assessing the historicity or pseudo-historicity of the travel accounts expressed in these narratives. “How, for instance, is one to distinguish fact from fiction, either as writer or reader, in the case of unverifiable records of private experience taking place in profoundly unfamiliar surroundings? How do the pressures of audience expectation and the writer’s predispositions transform the language and content of such records? Are they records at all, or only literary occasions for compensatory fantasies on the part of the disillusioned, the nostalgic, the bewildered?” (Campbell 2).

Fictional Levantine otherworlds populated by hyperbolic and grotesque figures exist alongside utopian terrains in the Greek novelistic romances, providing the main setting for adventurous traveling and romantic action.<sup>3</sup> Within the bounds of the imaginary setting, hero and heroine try to understand oddity and rationalize natural perplexity through dialogue and contemplation of the power of the supernatural. This internal quest of the protagonists to understand the increasingly threatening Levantine terrain they occupy and establish their place in it, is expressed in carefully constructed ekphrases that interrupt the narrative flow, creating a secure link between the fantastical, the desired, and the dystopian.

In this chapter I will study manifestations of the monstrous, the supernatural, and the divine, within particular narrative spaces—oneiric and textual (ekphrastic)—in which the dystopian is manifested. I will also examine how the early-Greek writers and their Byzantine counterparts juxtaposed contemporary social meaning with inherited literary convention in their narrative manipulation of the sinister and the dystopian.

The fantastical and the dystopian are staples of the medieval Greek romance. They dictate the mood of the literary work and color with suspense and incredible detail the superhuman ventures of the protagonists in both the Greek novelistic romances and in the Byzantine revival of the genre, thirteen centuries after its origin. Dreams (omens and hallucinations), near-death experiences, attempted suicides, violent abductions, seeming rape, and the employment of magic in the service of the violent and the grotesque occur in both the Greek

---

<sup>3</sup> Among the Greek novelistic romances, *AR* provides ample proof of natural monstrosities found in obscure and ill-defined locations in the East.

novelistic romances and in their Byzantine revival, allegorized and appropriated through Christian doctrine.

Scientific and pseudo-historic sources reveal that fantastic tales of travel and adventure were quite popular well before the evolution of the Greek novelistic romance as a genre. Geographic and ethnographic details of eastern terrains and their denizens were just as likely to turn up in the ostensibly factual accounts of travelers and geographers as in the Greek novelistic romances. This apparently popular lore which influenced the content of the Greek romances, was presented in the present tense and thus appeared less distanced from the “real” world inhabited by those who chose to believe in it—the Greek novelistic romances in particular blur the essential dividing line “between truth and untruth, [and] invite confusion between what is and what is not real” (Morgan 178).<sup>4</sup> This “confusion,” as Morgan is referring to it, has often been attributed to the narrative form of the new genre that combined history, pseudo-history, and prose-fiction. Prose is conventionally the medium of literature of information and analysis.

And because it is closer to the ‘natural’ language of normal speech, it is able to take itself for granted, to ignore its nature as medium and to pretend to a transparency denied to verse. It was thus possible to feel, though admittedly the feeling is not articulated in quite these terms, that fiction in verse foregrounds the telling rather than the substance, opening doors to linguistic and compositional devices (such as allegory, irony, coded self-reference, aesthetic distance) which acknowledge and so partly redeem the text’s literal

---

<sup>4</sup> J.R. Morgan’s complete article, “Make-believe and Make Believe: The Fictionality of the Greek Novels” is found in Gill and Wiseman’s (eds.), *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World*, (1993). See pages 175-229.

untruth; whereas prose presents the reader with ostensibly unmediated fiction-as-reality. Of course, the very immediacy of the prose medium was one of romancer's prime assets, allowing direct engagement of reader with the events of the narrative. Instinctively, novelists were drawn to exploit the very possibilities of the genre which most offended unsympathetic observers. (Morgan 178-79).

It is worth noting here that in the Hellenistic times pleasure and entertainment were legitimate functions of historiography; more specifically, the accomplished historiographer strove to present his readers with "a dramatic re-enactment of events, just as for Aristotle tragedy re-enacted or imitated action. Only in this way [could] the reality of the past be conveyed" (Morgan 184). Obviously, from the point of view of strict historical accuracy, such creative historiography is purely deceptive and false, but from a literary point of view, it marked the development of creative and imaginative prose fiction, the type that flourished for the next five centuries (from the AD 100 – 400) and was revived again in Byzantium from the 12<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries.

One can trace the evolution of the fantastic and the adventurous in the Greek romances through a study of the genre's popularity—the new genre seems to have emerged as a response to a new social structure and the new demands from an increasingly educated reading public.<sup>5</sup> Aristotle and Quintilian

---

<sup>5</sup> Tomas Haag discusses several oral and written sources that inspired the fantastic adventures of the Greek novelistic romances such as ethnographic and paradoxographical stories of strange peoples and places, behind which "we may discern Greek seafarers' tales told to the home audience about their fabulous adventures in far-off counties. Odysseus' account to the Phaeacians of lotus-eaters, Cyclopes, and other strange creatures is built up of such matter, likewise the stories attached to the voyage of the Argonauts, featuring hybrids like dog-heads and half-hounds, or pygmies and hyperboreans (people of the far North). These fantasies came later, in Ctesias for instance, to be combined with reports of the scientific exploration

emphasized that the marvelous and the wondrous were events as well as effects.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the occurrence of the unexpected, the awesome, or the inexplicable in nature and human works had an intellectual, emotional, and aesthetic impact on the observer / reader. Longinus, namely, in his treatise *On the Sublime* argues that “human aspirations ‘soar beyond the boundaries by which we are circumscribed’ and men ‘always reserve their admiration for what is out of the ordinary.’” (Kenseth 67).<sup>7</sup> The influx of geographic data that the early Hellenistic period witnessed has often been compared to that which followed the discovery of America—a land which, after all, was at first thought to represent the extension of Alexander’s India.<sup>8</sup>

The dystopian, the monstrous, and the grotesque<sup>9</sup>--the byproducts of the fantastic—are recurrent *topoi* in the description of Eastern and Levantine

---

of distant countries in the North and East, India in particular. The boundary between the factual and the fabulous was fluid” (117).

<sup>6</sup> The marvelous differs from the strange in that it remains unexplained and presupposes the existence of the supernatural.

<sup>7</sup> Longinus wrote his treatise *On the Sublime* in the first century BC.

<sup>8</sup> Of all Greek writers to have pondered and written on the matter of geographical boundaries and wonders, Plato was the first to have thought seriously about the worlds beyond the *oikoumene* (οικουμένη), though “there is evidence that here, as elsewhere, he owes much to the Pythagoreans. In the *Timaeus* and *Critias*, Plato describes the enormous island of Atlantis, formerly located in Ocean outside the Pillars of Heracles, and claims that the subsidence of that island has left the seas there shallow and unnavigable. The *Timaeus* portion of the myth also goes further and imagines a chain of islands stretching away to the west of Atlantis, leading by stages to an enormous mainland forming the opposite bank of the Ocean; this region is not named, but is described as the ‘true sea, and the land enclosing it, that which one might in complete truthfulness call a continent.’ It is this trans-Oceanic element to the Atlantis myth that has especially interested students of ancient geography, since it seems wholly superfluous within its context: the farther continent is (as far as we know) uninhabited and plays no part in the central story of the war between Atlantis and Athens. Why then did Plato bother to include his famous sentence describing these far-western lands? Are we here entitled to speak, as has Paul Friendlander, of “Plato as geographer,” a man interested in putting across earnest (if highly speculative theories about the structure of the globe?” (Romm 124-25).

<sup>9</sup> The aesthetic term *grotesque* is recent, but, anyone familiar with medieval illumination and sculpture knows that the representational mode itself is older and its effectiveness accessible to an 11<sup>th</sup> century reader

otherworlds, enhancing the expectation of the existence of the paradisiacal realm on earth. Sinister fate, near-death experiences, and extreme violence (all staples of hagiographic narrative as well) are usually experienced by the fictional protagonists of the Greek romances in dreams, omens, and hallucinations. They involve marginal terrains and unorthodox creatures with anthropomorphic characteristics that inhabit them, as well as mysterious transformations, exaggerations, and deformity that inflict heathen peoples who are far removed—spiritually and topographically—from the walled City of Constantine.

Such descriptions are usually introduced either before or immediately after ekphrases of utopian realms, thus enhancing the desirability and temporality of both, idealized terrains and peaceful existence. The contents of these dystopian descriptions, however, vary significantly from antiquity to the early Middle Ages, reflecting the social and cultural changes that occurred in the Levant and influenced cultural sensibilities and literary tastes.<sup>10</sup>

---

as well as to ourselves. Mary Campbell, in her discussion of the grotesque as it relates to the popular *Wonders of the East*, urges contemporary readership to “readjust [its] idea of the sphere in which the term *grotesque* seems applicable” (60), and restrict its application to the artificial. “We consider it a kind of conceptual / aesthetic game-playing performed in the neutral and marginal space of fantasy. *Wonders* not only resist our modern need to classify it as fictional before speaking of it as grotesque; it is anomalous as well in the cosmographical discourse of its own era. It is entirely unmoralized, empty of reference to Scripture, and only covertly allegorical” (60).

<sup>10</sup> Suzanne MacAlister, for instance, situates the dystopian in the cultural and social environment of the Hellenistic times that gave birth to the Greek novelistic romances, pointing out the emergence of the individual in an increasingly uncertain and violent world. “What prevails in this society, she argues, “is a cultural feeling where desires and fears are totally bound to a focus on ‘self’ and private life—a self and life which are totally subject to the whims of an all-controlling chance that nothing in the known and rational world can assure the individual any consistent validation of what the ‘self’ means and how it might be integrated into the expanding international and polyglot culture of the Roman empire. Individuals are faced with uncertainties which they perceive can only be resolved by a ‘judgment’ from forces external to the self. Hence something which operates from outside the known world must be consulted: divination is resorted to more than ever before, dreams are interpreted for their personal messages, and ‘chance’ or ‘fate’ must be lived with or provoked into making decisions” (13).

In the post-Hellenistic era of the Greek novelistic romances, the world was widened—new routes were opened for trade towards China in the East, toward Russia in the North, to the regions south of the Sahara; the Mediterranean and the Near East were traversed by trade routes by land and sea, and as a result,

[. . .] between the harbours and the cities, traveling was risky: on the sea storms and pirates, along the roads professional gangs of robbers or half-wild native tribes [were common, and thus] thank-offerings were indeed called for. Piracy in particular reached grotesque proportions in the Hellenistic period. Bases for organized piracy were first of all Crete, then, in late Hellenistic times, Cilicia (in SE Asia Minor), whose rocky, rugged coast gave shelter to a veritable pirate state. This business was permitted to continue without too much hindrance thanks to the rivalry of the Hellenistic states. The pirates were secretly supported in order to harm the other party, and pirates were hired to commit acts of war for which governments did not want to assume responsibility, such as attacks on neutral states. (Haag 85).<sup>11</sup>

Influenced by folkloric lore and notoriously fictional accounts of  
Levantine seafarers, fictional Greek otherworlds (both Middle-eastern and

---

<sup>11</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, in “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel” (the third of the four essays he presents in *The Dialogic Imagination*), places the setting of the Greek novelistic romances in time and place and describes the literary trademarks of the genre. “The action of the plot unfolds against a very broad and varied geographical background usually in three to five countries separated by seas (Greece, Persia, Phoenicia, Egypt, Babylon, Ethiopia and elsewhere). There the descriptions, often very detailed, of specific features of counties, cities, structures of various kinds, works of art (pictures, for example), the habits and customs of the population, various exotic and marvelous animals and other wonders and rarities. The novel also contains fairly wide ranging discussions on various religions, philosophical, political, and scientific topics (on fate, omens, the power of Eros, human passions, tears and so forth). Large portions of these novels are taken up with speeches of the characters—relevant or otherwise—constructed in accordance with all the rules of a later rhetoric. Compositionally therefore, the Greek romance strives for a certain encyclopedic quality, a quality that is characteristic of the genre” (88).

Levantine) inspired considerable fascination and fear in the audiences and readers they reached, and the popularity of the genre attests to such an impact. In the narrative of the Greek novelistic romances history and geography boil down to legend and lure the traveler (whether fictional or historical) abroad: “he both corrects and adds to the material of the legend, is himself vulgarized in the popular imagination, and lures on the next wave of discovery” (Campbell 49).

Judging by the frequent occurrences, thus, of violent and uncivilized lands into which the hero and heroine find themselves transported in the Greek romances, it is safe to infer that the audience of these romances must have spent much time with thoughts, fears, and hopes concerning real or imaginary otherworlds.<sup>12</sup> The study of medieval Greek otherworlds—utopian and dystopian alike—thus, can potentially reveal relations between cultural, historical, political, and literary forces that forged images of eastern otherworlds and influenced perceptions and misconceptions of the East and the Levant in the minds of medieval Greeks.

---

<sup>12</sup>Pirates, bandits, and bizarre anthropoids like the dreaded Boukoloi who inhabited the Nile Delta, are staple characters of the Greek novel. These creatures bring about disaster and disarray (they raid, rape, destroy, and spread panic) in an otherwise peaceful realm, and often function as reminders of human nature’s fickleness, vice, and temptation.

Bakhtin refers to the dystopian (and often utterly fictional) qualities of the world of the Greek novelistic romances in *The Dialogic Imagination*. In his third chapter, “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel,” he notes that “the world of these romances is large and diverse. But this size and diversity is utterly abstract. For a shipwreck one must have a sea, but which particular sea (in the geographical and historical sense) makes no difference at all. For escape it is important to go to another country; for kidnapers it is important to transport their victim to another country—but which particular country again makes no difference at all. The adventurist events of the Greek romance have no essential ties with any particular details of individual countries that might figure in the novel, with their social or political structure, with their culture or history. None of these distinctive details contribute in any way to the event as a determining factor; the event is determined by chance alone, by random contingency in a given spatial locus (a given country, city and so forth). The nature of a given place does not figure as a component in the event; the place figures in solely as naked, abstract expanse of space” (100).

Early into the narrative of the Greek novelistic romances, the hero's sudden quest for knowledge and adventure initiates a sinister twist of events that take him well beyond the bounds of the familiar Levantine basin, into fantastical and pseudo-historical eastern lands.<sup>13</sup> The young, chaste, virtuous, and superlatively beautiful protagonists, having realized that their love cannot follow a desired course leading to marriage for reasons beyond their control (like an arranged marriage or betrothal to another), submit themselves to exile from their normal environments and thereafter, "within a nebulous time-frame, their existence becomes one of ordeals and sufferings involving confrontations with danger and death. Removed from their homes and families, they are tossed about in alien lands, mostly separated from each other, lost, and as victims of the unpredictable force of controlling chance or *tyche*. The foreign places into which they are cast, of familiar but far-away names like Babylon or Ethiopia and scattered across the entire Hellenistic world and beyond, are totally alien to the displaced Greek lovers in terms of culture and customs" (MacAlister 19).<sup>14</sup>

The dystopian lore in the Greco-Byzantine romance fares a particularly well-known literary ancestry. Ancient Greek and Roman authors developed the scientific, ethnographic, and cosmographic interpretations of the "monstrous" that

---

<sup>13</sup> B. P. Reardon offers a socio-historical explanation of the flourishing of the dystopian and its numerous manifestations in the new genre, explaining, "the bigger the world grows, the smaller the individual feels. He feels his helplessness before the immensity of things; he grows passive and feels himself being arbitrarily tossed about by fate. The novel may be looked upon as the *myth* of the late Hellenism: with its central theme of the lonely traveler searching for his beloved, it is an expression of the individual's sense of isolation in the world. The search is a search for security, in God or in some other human being. The escape from isolation, the way to salvation, is to find the God or human being who cares about you as an individual. In this way only, can you find your social identity; the time has passed when the individual felt he had a meaningful position in society as a 'citizen'" (Haag 89-90).

<sup>14</sup> See "A Response to Uncertainty" in *Dreams and Suicides: The Greek Novel from Antiquity to the Byzantine Empire*, (1996).

remained influential until the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>15</sup> Aristotle, Plutarch, and Pliny the Elder were among the first neophytes of science and proto-history to exhibit acute interest in observation and categorization of scientific, as well as factual, geographical, and anthropological knowledge.

Pliny the Elder (AD 23-79) compiled much of the cosmographical and anthropological knowledge of his time in his *Natural History*, an encyclopedia of astronomy, meteorology, geography, zoology, and botany, that also included human inventions, and a section on monsters.<sup>16</sup> In *Natural History*, the traveled author affirms that “India, and the region of Ethiopia more especially, abounds in wonders,” providing habitat for a particularly peculiar breed of “people,” the Sciapodae, who “are in the habit of lying on their backs during the time of the extreme heat, and protect themselves from the sun by the shade of their feet;” and other creatures as well, that are “without necks and have eyes in their shoulders” (13-14).<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Unfortunately, during the Middle Ages, these texts were gradually lost, and it was not until the 13<sup>th</sup> century, through contact with the works of Arabic physicians and philosophers, that European scholars rediscovered the classical texts (including Aristotle’s writings) that were to have such a profound impact on western culture.

<sup>16</sup> Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 10 vols., trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), vol. 1.  
Pliny’s work, *Historia Naturalis* (finished in 77AD), is “a vast uncritical collection of miscellaneous material, but the geographical parts have been censured as the most defective portions of the whole. It is in line with this unscientific approach that Pliny—unlike his Greek contemporary Strabo—accepted all the miraculous stories related by earlier authors. He introduced the fabulous races of India with the following words: ‘India and the regions of the Ethiopians—characteristically enough, they appear here together again—are particularly abundant in wonders’” (Wittkower 166-67).

<sup>17</sup> William Ashworth in “Remarkable Humans and Singular Beasts” notes that “monsters before 1550 [were] divided into three basic types. First were the generically monstrous, those races that shared and inherited certain monstrous features. Such races included the sciapods, with one leg and one large foot; the acephaloids, with no head and facial features in the chest; the cynocephaloids, or dog-headed people, and so on. Most of the monstrous races were described in Pliny’s *Natural History* (cat. no, 2), and their images became a staple of Renaissance cosmographical literature. They were thought to exist in the fringes of the inhabited world, in Ethiopia, in the Orient, and in the Hyperborean lands. A second type were the mixed

Rather than reporting on unique or at least anthropologically unusual creatures, Pliny discussed monstrous races; the fear of the unknown led to the belief that what was the furthest away was monstrous, a belief shared and advocated in writing by Lucian (*True Story—TS*), Antonius Diogenis (*Wonders Beyond Thule—WT*), Pseudo-Calisthenes (*Alexander Romance—AR*), and Heliodorus (*Aithiopeka—Aith.*). The fantastical romances of the Hellenistic writers, “strive to clothe the general with particulars to give an illusion of historical reality, and to enable the exploitation of uncertainty about the course of the story for reasons of excitement” (Morgan 183).<sup>18</sup>

Pliny gave a description of supposedly monstrous races living in the remote lands of Africa and Asia and of other anthropoids that were resurrected shortly after their seeming death:<sup>19</sup> “He fell asleep in a cave where he slept for fifty-seven years; when he awoke, as though it had been the following day, he was

---

monsters, those thought to be the product of breeding with animals. And the third were the prodigies, those byproducts of divine foreknowledge whose distorted features carried a portent of future events. Zoological lore had exact counterparts to each of these monstrous types, which is why they all got mixed together in the monster literature” (133-34).

<sup>18</sup> Aristotle’s concept of probability which is articulated in his *Poetics* applies on the narrative form of prose-fiction. Aristotle notes that “with their stress on the unexpected and exciting, what happens to their central characters usually occurs in spite of, rather than because of, their characters and actions. The novelists’ search for the drama of surprise promoted the irruption of unmotivated and unforeseen destructive forces, and as a result the hero came to be cast more as destiny’s victim than as its agent. Probability made way for coincidence, and profoundly meaningful reversals are reduced to simple misfortunes, which bring more enlightenment in their wake. When hero and heroine are perfect to begin with, there is no scope for tragic error of flaw as motor of the fictional action, nor for learning through suffering” (Morgan 183).

<sup>19</sup> Pliny devotes a separate section in his study of wonders (*Natural History*) to a most peculiar type of anthropoids, the Essenes, who live on the fringes of the known world, avoiding contact with civilization. “The Essenes are a people that live apart from the world, and marvelous beyond all others throughout the whole earth, for they have no women among them; to sexual desire they are strangers; money they have none; the palm trees are their own companions. Day after day, however, their numbers are fully recruited by multitudes of strangers that resort to them, driven thither to adopt their usages by the tempests of fortune, and wearied with the miseries of life. Thus it is that through thousands of ages, incredible to relate, this people eternally prolongs its existence without a single birth taking place there; so fruitful a source of population to it is that weariness of life which is felt by others” (21).

much astonished at the changes which he saw in the appearance of everything around him: after this, old age, it is said, came upon him in an equal number of days with the years he had slept, but his life was prolonged to his hundred and fifty-seventh year” (19-20).<sup>20</sup>

Fantastical descriptions of distant peoples and places—barbarous and civilized alike; contaminated with folkloric details and recurrent exaggerations—circulated widely in the form of travelogues, verbal story-telling, and pseudo-scientific treatises, particularly around the busy port-towns and major cities of the Levant, where the genre of the Greek novelistic romance flourished. Mary Campbell, in her discussion of the popularity of the marvelous and the dystopian in the Hellenistic times, observes that the most degenerate sources of travel and ethnographic material proved the most popular and successful, at least in literature, and argues that

[. . .] the history of travel exploration and discovery is mainly an achievement of men of action and unlearned people—not of scholars like Photius and Lilius, who thought they could distinguish fact from fantasy and preferred the former. A truly well-informed Columbus would never have set out for the East by sailing West. The best authorities knew better than he how far away were the western shores of Cathay. The appeal of the mirage may have been responsible in the end of more new knowledge than the merely abstract satisfactions of truth. (50).

---

<sup>20</sup> For Pliny monstrous races were also a part of the generosity of Nature for whom nothing was impossible. After borrowing many ideas from Pliny, St Augustine eventually concluded that monsters were signs of original sin: “the existence of natural monsters was acknowledged, as for example, the product of cross-breeding between different animal species or between humans and animals. But descriptions of such beasts were usually found in the monster literature, not in the literature of natural history” (Ashworth, Jr. 116).

In the narrative of the Greco-Byzantine romances, multifarious expressions of the dystopian offset the seemingly idealized state of affairs that exist within walled gardens of desire, castles, and fortified cities in which hero and heroine escape temporarily. The most horrific expression of the dystopian in these romances, in fact, occurs in oneiric premonitions that take the form of nightmares, dreams, and omens. Northrop Frye, in *The Anatomy of Criticism*, considers the central role of dreams in the Greek novelistic romances and focuses on their psychological and narratological significance: “translated into dream terms, the quest-romance is the search of the libido or desiring self for a fulfillment that will deliver it from the anxieties of reality, but will still contain that reality. The antagonists of the quest are often sinister figures, giants, ogres, witches and magicians, that clearly have a parental origin, and yet redeemed and emancipated paternal figure are involved too, as they are in psychological quests of both Freud and Jung” (193). Dreams and dreaming as a collective phenomenon thus, are shaped by social and cultural forces, and thus function as an important means of individual self-assertion.<sup>21</sup>

In classical and medieval philosophy, dreams and visions were perceived through the soul’s image-making power, *imaginatio* or *phantasia*, a capacity midway between sense and reason that shares some of the qualities of each. This characteristic of dreams to generate moving imaginative impressions is

---

<sup>21</sup> Jacques Le Goff discusses the changing attitudes towards dreams from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD in *The Medieval Imagination*, considering primarily the cultural changes and the rise of Christianity as a prominent religious force. He explains that “pagans and Christians in this period coexisted in an anxious climate, which affected their dreams. A flourishing interest in dreams and dream-theory is evident in the East. Dreams played a substantial role in the philosophical revival that took place in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, particularly among neo-Platonists in those crossroads cities of religion, philosophy, and culture, Alexandria and Rome” (199-200).

manifested in the first book of Achilles Tatius' *LC*, where the fates reveal to the hero, Clitophon, in an ominous dream that the wedding arrangements already under serious preparation by the hero's family will not materialize.

Hippias, Clitophon's father, has planned for his son to marry Kalligone, Clitophon's half sister, but the fates have different plans, revealed to Clitophon in his sleep. In a dream he and his prospective bride, whose bodies are grown together, are separated by a sickle-wielding woman who looks like a fury: "a huge, fearsome woman who glowered at me savagely: eyes shot with blood, rough cheeks, snakes for hair, a sickle in her right hand, a torch I her left. In a wild attack she aimed her sickle at our groin where the two bodies joined, and severed the girl from me" (178). Following this premonition, the hero meets and falls in love with Leucippe, the heroine of the romance, while still betrothed to Kalligone. The unwelcome marriage is further postponed by a recurring dream regarding the wedding-service itself that makes Klinias apprehensive: "he was conducting the service, he had just lit the nuptial torch, and suddenly the fire went out" (194). Klinias, in turn, consults priests and interpreters, who tell him he must go to the seaside at night and offer sacrifice to Zeus.

Similar oneiric premonitions occur in Heliodorus' second book of *Aithiopeka*, (*Aith.*), according to which, Charicleia, the heroine, worn out with worry and physical exhaustion after her abduction and near-death experience, dreams of a bloody man cutting out her right eye and wonders how such a premonition might manifest itself while confessing it to her beloved Theagenes:

“A wicked, evil-hearted man, undaunted even by your invincible strength, tried to ravish me as I slept on your knees, and I dreamt that he put out my right eye with the sword he held in his hand. I wish that the apparition had been real, Theagenes, and not a mere dream!’ [...] because [...] I should prefer to have lost one of my eyes than to feel such dread for your sake. I have a horrible fear that you might be the object of my dream, for I count you my eye, my soul, my all” (389).

Riddling oneiric premonitions are also crucial in *AR*. Here, it is through portents and omens that the marvelous conception, birth, and premature death of the Greek commander are foretold.<sup>22</sup> Nectanabus’ pursuit of the beautiful Queen Olympias leads the Egyptian sheer to the use of magic; with the aid of hallucinatory plants that induce bizarre dreams, Olympias sees god Ammon embracing her at night, prophesying that she is to bear a male child—Ammon’s very own—who will be her avenger. Nectanabus, in turn, takes advantage of Olympias’ vision and convinces her to allow him to sleep in her chamber in order to intercede with the god on her behalf, and Olympias grants him his wish. The Egyptian sheer, disguised—wearing the fleece of a ram and a pair of horns—gets into bed with the Queen the very same night and his lust for her is quenched.

Alexander’s premature death, much like his extraordinary conception and birth, is associated with the supernatural and the grotesque, both of which are made possible through the means of portents and premonitions. Although

---

<sup>22</sup> The Alexander romances were the fictional vehicle of a mass of legendary and pseudo-scientific matter—the Matter of the East—that descended from Herodotus and Particularly Pliny through such texts as *Wonders of the East* and *Alexander’s Letter to Aristotle*. The popular material isolated in these latter works comes very close to fiction and was actually cast in the epistolary form, appropriate of “real” travel-literature.

Alexander has been pre-warned of his early death by Indian priests, several portents are reported in Babylon when the Greek commander enters the city, validating the foresight of the divine powers: “One of the native women gave birth to a child, the upper part of whose body, as far as the flanks, was all natural and human; but from the thighs downward there were animal heads so as to make the child just like the Scylla—there were the heads of lions and of wild dogs. And the forms moved and everyone could make them out and recognize what each was, but the child’s head was stillborn” (731). Soothsayers and magicians are summoned to decipher the portent and various interpretations are offered, of which the most prominent provides the solution: the human half symbolizes Alexander himself, who is soon to die and the animal heads are his closest followers, who will survive him—they lack reason, and they are wild and hostile toward him. Sure enough, a conspiracy against the Macedonian leader is plotted; no long after the omen is deciphered, Alexander’s cupbearer poisons his commander at a banquet.

The expression of the dystopian in dreams, omens, and hallucinations (much like the sinister and the monstrous) fares a celebrated Greco-Roman past. Aristotle composed three essays on sleep and dreams that belong to the collection of short treatises known as *Parva Naturalia*.<sup>23</sup> The first essay, “De Somno et

---

<sup>23</sup> The title *Parva Naturalia* has no great authority. David Ross, the editor and translator of Aristotle’s treatises, argues that *Parva Naturalia* “was used, towards the end of the fifteenth century, in some of the manuscripts of the *Vetus Translatio Latina*, and had been first used by Aegidius Romanus (Gilles de Rome), toward the end of the thirteenth century. The title is not particularly descriptive; Aristotle sums up the contents better when, in 436, 6-8, he refers to ‘the phenomena common to soul and body.’ That he thought of the various works as in some sense forming a whole, is shown by the words that follow, in which he mentions, as the subjects to be discussed, sensation, memory, desire and its species, pleasure and pain, waking and sleep, youth and age, respiration and expiration, life and death, health and disease” (1).

Vigilia,” reflects the philosopher’s theories regarding the soul-body relationship, according to which the soul and the body are undividable aspects—the form and the matter respectively—of a single living organism. The second essay, “De Insomniis,” takes a similar approach to dreams—the dream is assumed to be a psychological phenomenon that has to be understood by reference to its physical basis.<sup>24</sup> Initially, Aristotle raises the question whether dreaming is the work of perception or thought, and concludes, after systematic examination, that dreaming is neither the work of judgment, nor of straightforward perception, but rather the work of the perceptual part, to which it belongs in its imagining (φανταστικον—phantastikon) capacity:

[. . .] a dream, then, is an image occurring in sleep. Yet, just as images seen in waking life are not dreams, so some images experienced in sleep are not dreams; some are faint sense-impressions seen or heard with eyes or ears half-active, in a state between sleeping and waking. A dream is a *modification* of sense-impressions, occurring in, and as a result of, sleep” (Ross 47). Judgment is impaired during sleep, and therefore “what is *like* something is judged to be the real thing,” thus “[dream] is an

---

In *Parva Naturalia* Aristotle defines sleep as a state of perpetual incapacitation and makes a distinction between sleep and other states of unconsciousness by reference to its physical cause.

<sup>24</sup> David Ross, in his introduction to Aristotle’s *Parva Naturalia* (1955), also focuses on the philosopher’s explanation of dreams, while referring to their physiological effects and qualities. Ross summarizes Aristotle’s argument as follows: “Since, apart from dreams, to which Aristotle devotes a special treatise, the mind is inactive in sleep, the remainder of the *De Somno* [*et Vigilia*] is almost entirely occupied with his views about the physiology of sleep. All four types of cause are, he says, involved in its causation. (1) The final cause consists in the fact that rest is good for every for everything that is naturally active but cannot with pleasure be active continuously; sleep makes possible perception and thought, which are ends for all creatures capable of them. (2) As regards the efficient cause, he assumes that this is the same for bloodness as it is for sanguineous (vertebrate) animals, and for the latter as for man. He has said elsewhere that the seat of sensation is the same as that of movement, viz. the part between the head and the belly, i.e. in sanguineous animals the region of the heart” (39).

appearance [φάντασμα—*fantasma*] that arises from the movement of the sense-impressions, while one is the sleeping state” (Ross 48).<sup>25</sup>

Finally, Aristotle’s third essay, “*De Divinatione per Somnum*” presents the philosopher’s inquiry in relation to divination from dreams—dreams in question must be either causes or signs of things that happen, or else coincidences (Ross 47); dreams may be signs of what is happening about the body so “[. . .] one should pay extremely close attention to dreams. And that is a reasonable assumption even for those who are not practitioners, but are pursuing a theoretical inquiry” (Ross 48).<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> In her study of the significance and interpretation of dreams in Byzantium from the 12<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> century, MacAlister takes into account the impact Aristotle’s *Parva naturalia* (and *De divinatione per somnia*, in particular) had in the way dreams were perceived by writers and audiences, and explains that “Aristotle’s treatises on dreams were studied, debated, and appropriated repeatedly in 12<sup>th</sup> century Byzantium; dreams were not perceived as parts of the imaginary, but very much part of concurrent reality. [. . .] The voice of Aristotle is made to intrude on the discourse of the ancient novel to strike another oblique blow, not only at what a dream’s conventional uses might denote, but once more, at notions of what dreams represented and assumptions about the supernatural. Prodromos clearly appropriates a scientific theory about the physiological causes of dreaming expounded by Aristotle (who denied any notion of the dream’s revelatory qualities), in his treatise *De divinatione per somnia* in the *Parva naturalia*. There in his discussion of elements of dreams being actually part of concurrent reality, Aristotle had explained that when phlegm slips down the throat of a sleeping person it can provide the impulse for a dream of sleet flavors. Just prior to the description of the dream, and leading into it, Prodromos and Dosikles break the narrative to digress on a theoretical excursus about Physiological causes of sleep. Wine, he explains, causes sleep, and sleep comes about as a result of vapors rising to the head (3. 3-16). Dosikles’ theory can be found expounded by Aristotle in his treatise *De somno et vigilia*, again found in the *Parva naturalia*. When these vapors are great in quantity, Aristotle says, dreams follow; he next explains that vapors are caused by the rising of heat to the brain after which the excessive rise of vapor collects into phlegm” (MacAlister 141).

<sup>26</sup> Aristotle concludes that dreams may also be *causes* because “[. . .] movements in the course of sleep must frequently be origins of day-time actions, for the reason that our intention to do these has had the way paved for it in the appearances (φάντασματα—*fantasmata*) at night. Most of them, however, would seem to be coincidences, especially all that are peculiar, or concern matters where no casual initiative lies in the dreamers themselves” (130). In the second chapter of the same book, Aristotle argues that dreams are not communications from God, or they would occur in the daytime and to more appropriate recipients. He also states that “many dreams are not fulfilled is in no way surprising, for if another movement should take place, prevailing over the one from which (when it was going to happen) the sign occurred, then the latter movement does not occur.” Later, he presents a theory to explain precognitive dreams: “when something has moved a portion of water or air, and this in turn has moved another, then even when the initial impulse has ceased, it results in a similar sort of movement continuing up to a certain point, although the original

The most comprehensive work on dreams in antiquity, however, was comprised by Artemidorus of Daldis—to him we owe one of the first and most famous dream interpretations, *Oneirocritica* (“The Interpretation of Dreams”).<sup>27</sup> Artemidorus, no doubt influenced by Aristotle’s third treatise in *Parva Naturalia*—“De Divinatione per Somnum”—and other dream-writers of antiquity that he mentions by name, also views dreams as a vehicle to interpreting sinister fate and a non-human means of understanding chance-events.<sup>28</sup> In his writings, which include methods of interpreting one’s own dreams, and signs of connecting popular association between object and dream-image, one can deduct that

---

mover is not present. In this way it is possible that some sort of movement and perception reaches the souls of dreamers, coming from the objects, and thus they (images and emanations) produce perception in the body because of sleep, people asleep being more sensitive to even slight internal movements that cause appearances (phantasmata) from which people have previsions of what is going to happen.” This theory also explains why precognition occurs more often to average rather than intellectual people: “[. . .] on our account, one would expect it to be random subjects who have prevision. For the mind of such a person is not reflective, but is deserted, as it were, and completely vacant. Thus, once set in motion, it is led on according to the direction of its moving impulse” (White 50).

<sup>27</sup> Artemidorus was born at Ephesus at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD and was surnamed “the Daldian” from his mother’s birthplace, Daldis, in Lydia. He lived in Greece about 140 AD, and almost certainly drew on older works, such as Assurbanipal’s dream-book. Clay tablets found at Nineveh, part of the library of the Assyrian king Assurbanipal—669 and 626 BC—tell of the importance of dreams in the life of kings and commoners. The Assurbanipal dream-book is itself only a link in a chain of tradition, as the library possibly held records starting about 5000 BC.

*The Oneirocritica* is an acute exposition of the theory of interpreting dreams, and its practical application to examples systematically arranged according to the several stages of human life. An appendix, counted as a fifth book, gives a collection of dreams that have come true.

The most comprehensive ancient treatise on dreams is Macrobius’ *Commentarius in Somnium Scipionis*, written at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. In this treatise, Macrobius (influenced both by Aristotle and Artemidorus) stressed the traditional idea that there is a hierarchy of dreamers, and that only the dreams of persons invested with supreme authority could be regarded as authentic and irrefutable premonitory dreams.

<sup>28</sup> He added many personal observations to what he had learned from the ancient books which preceded him. In fact, he and his followers believed that dreams could be understood best, not from divine inspiration, but by observing the details of ordinary everyday life.

In *Oneirocritica*, Artemidorus mentions several writers who had written on dreams, about whom, however, nothing is known. “Artemidorus asserts that he consulted the writings of Panyasis of Halicarnassus on the subjects of public dreams, [. . .] he also read the explanation of public dreams given by Nicostratus of Ephesus. He found a lengthy treatment of dreams involving hairy tongues and a detailed study of nocturnal and diurnal apparitions in the second book of a treatise by Apollonius of Teimessus. And he also refers to a work in these books on dreams, prescription, and medical cures written by Geminus of Tyre” (White 7).

Artemidorus was probably one of the first to see the connection between dream, imagery, and the way we associate particular feelings or ideas to objects.

In *Oneirocritica*, the author draws a distinction between two types of dreams, *Oneiroi* (Ονειροι) and *Enhypnia* (Ενυπνια). Between the two, only oneiroi hold significance as they can be utilized to envisage the future, while enhypnia are indicative merely of a present state of affairs. Oneiroi include visions and oracular dreams that can be further distinguished into *Theorematikoi* (Θεωρηματικοι), that predict the future directly, and *Allegorikoi* (Αλληγορικοι), which predict allusively and require interpretation. Artemidorus is principally concerned with this last categorization of dreams and bases the bulk of his work fundamentally in the discussion of their meaning and interpretation. His main endeavor is committed to producing credible principles for understanding allegorical dreams and his crucial argument is that, “the interpretation of dreams is nothing other than the juxtaposition of similarities” (White 10). These similarities lie between dream-imagery and the actual outcomes predicted by the dreams while a web of metaphor connects dream-reality with the real world.

Artemidorus also establishes certain practical strategies in order to make his basic principles effective. One of them, to avoid plausible errors and misinterpretations, is that only dreams that are remembered fully should be interpreted. Furthermore, the interpreter should be well-informed about local customs, for it is essential to place each dream in the appropriate cultural background. Additionally, the interpreter must be acquainted with the dreamer—

be aware of who he is, what he does, his birth, property, state of health and age; he also has to know about the dreamer's state of mind, his position in society, his mood and his habits. All this information is crucial because, according to Artemidorus, dreams may have a different meaning for different people.<sup>29</sup>

Although his main preoccupation was to present dreams as omens of the future or of the outcome of present actions, Artemidorus also speculated upon many other aspects of dreaming. He considered, for example, the importance of recurring dreams and was interested in the question of why some dreams produced such intense emotions. He also wondered how and why a dream might show clear signs of physical illness long before it became evident externally. In attempting to understand these various phenomena of dreams, he classified them into two types—the Somnium, and the Insomnium. Dreams of the Insomnium type Artemidorus related to the feelings and concerns evoked by everyday life.

Dreams and dreaming, overall, provide an escape into the unconscious and the desirable and rekindle hopes and desires that wouldn't stand a chance to materialize under realistic circumstances in the Greek novelistic romances. They also provide tools for understanding the arbitrary nature of fate: "the contents of the novels' dreams—the anxieties and preoccupations they reflect and the events to which they refer—suggest that the sought-after understanding relates to the

---

<sup>29</sup> For instance, if a poor man dreams of gold he will become rich, while if a rich man dreams of gold he will be the victim of scheming. At this point it is important to note that for Artemidorus, the characteristics mentioned above are not considered as personality traits, but are rather viewed as isolated elements and that nowhere in his work is implied a conception of personality in the modern connotation. Evidently, there is no difference here between what Artemidorus advises and how we arrive at insight into our dreams today. The situation of the dreamer and the common associations prevalent socially, are all a part of the insight. Artemidorus, therefore, advised dreamers to consider such points as whether what they dream is a lawful action, whether it is usual for the dreamer to do or be engaged in, what puns or associations exist in the dream, and even what language the dreamer speaks—for each language has different puns, associations, and idioms.

sphere of the self. Although the dream does grant a person the power to control or combat what is to come, it might—ideally—provide a means of resolving personal uncertainties” (MacAlister 42). Their importance in the medieval Greek romance is undisputed<sup>30</sup> and no other Greek romance explicates the significance of dreams than Lucian’s *TS*. According to this romance dreams are personified and follow human civil procedures and laws; they also occupy a distinct terrain that its civil functions and organization resemble those of an idealized society.

In *True Story*, Lucian and his brave crew accidentally visit the Island of the Blest where they spend seven blissful months and from which they depart bearing a letter from Odysseus, a celebrated inhabitant of the famed Isle, to his beloved Calipso. On their way to Ogygia, however, the men stop at a small island, “the Island of Dreams,” as they refer to it, on which Sleep rules, having under his power two satraps: Nightmare, the son of Pointless, and Richman, the son of Daydream. Winked dreams, monster dreams, sweet dreams, and all kinds of visions inhabit the isle that Lucian and the men enjoy immensely.

The dreams themselves varied in character and appearance. Some were tall and handsome and well-proportioned, others short and misshapen; some appeared to be made of gold, others were poor and dreams in carnival costume—some dressed up as kings, some as gods, and so on. Many of them in fact were recognized, having seen them before at home; they came up and greeted us like

---

<sup>30</sup> The importance of dreams in the late Hellenistic and early medieval periods remains undisputed not in the area of the Levant, but in both the West and the East: “beginning in the fourth century, when Christianity became the dominant religion and ideology in the West, and continuing during the subsequent transitional period known as late antiquity or the early Middle Ages, dreams and their interpretation, important matters in many societies, became cultural phenomena with which Christians had to deal” (Le Goff 193).

old friends, took us in charge, put us to sleep, and showed us most excellent and ingenious entertainment. (644-45).

It is perhaps unimportant to inquire to what extent the Island of Dreams and other islands represented by Lucian seriously or satirically (such as the Island of the Wicked, from which the smoke was rising, the Island of Calypso, and the Island of Women, the inhabitants of which are savage creatures of the sea who feed upon those who visit them) were abodes of the dead, retreats from the demands of ordinary existence, or even scenes of a primitive Golden Age. Although the interpretation seems to vary somewhat with the different authors, it is important to remember that oneiric autobiography was born in late antiquity and the development of dreaming was closely associated with the fashion for journeys in terrestrial and fictional otherworlds and the growing importance of individual judgment after death.

Nightmarish premonitions whether expressed in dreams, visions, or omens are staples of the dystopian in the Greek novelistic romances—they are almost always associated with violent abductions, rapes, and seeming death or near-death experiences. Heliodorus, the narrator of *Aith.*, begins his tale with a dramatic scene of mystery and excitement at the Heracleotic mouth of the Nile where a band of robbers comes upon a scene of mass-slaughter that apparently happened at a banquet, described in most vivid detail: “a mass of newly slain bodies, some of them quite dead, others still alive and still twitching;” nearby lay a man “felled by an axe, there another struck down by a stone picked up then and there from the

shingly beach; here a man battered to death with a club, there another burned to death with a brand from the fire” (353).

The only two survivors of the catastrophe are the hero and heroine (Theagenes and Charicleia), who are attacked and carried away by brutal pirates. During the night, the robber-chief, Thyamis, has a vivid “god-sent” dream in which he is back at his native Memphis and there Isis offers Charicleia to him in an ambiguous oracle, declaring: ““Thyamis, this maiden I deliver to you; you shall have her and not have her; you shall do wrong and slay her, but she shall not be slain”” (369). The next day Thyamis deciphers the dream himself, believing that he is now entitled to take advantage of Charicleia sexually. He soon proposes to the heroine, but she swiftly makes up an excuse. Sinister fortune, however, alters the course of events and points out the significance of the oxymoronic dream as Thyamis’ camp is attacked and Charicleia is locked in a cave for safety.

The battle, as expected, goes badly and Theagenes is now convinced that he has misinterpreted the dream; in turn, he goes to the cave with the intent to kill Charicleia, but once there, in the dark, he kills another woman who is speaking Greek and he mistakes for Charicleia and the life of the heroine is spared, allowing for the course of the narrative events to continue.

Dreams, at least on the narrative level, are multifunctional in the Greek novelistic romances. They can reflect and emphasize waking preoccupations and anxieties and thus, like the protagonists’ soliloquies, confirm the quest’s original purpose. As perceived revelatory devices, they can invite interpretation (which, in its turn, also serves to reflect the interpreting character’s aspirations and

anxieties) and, with hindsight, they can prove reliable articulators of events to come.<sup>31</sup> It is thus not surprising that the dreams that occur in the Greek novelistic romances relate to crucial points in the narrative or even assist in the furthering of the plot. MacAlister affirms that “not only do dreams serve as a non-human means of attempting to resolve that uncertainty or understanding chance events as they relate to the self, they are also made themselves, as in earlier literature, to serve as the intrusive chance: an interpretation of a dream—or a false interpretation—is frequently made to act as a trigger to subsequent events as, for example, Iphigeneia’s dream had done in Euripides’ *Iphigeneia in Tauris*” (70).

The seeming death of the heroine is yet another familiar *topos* in Medieval Greek romance that contributes to the suspense and intricacy of the events in the narrative plot. In Achilles Tatius’ *LC*, the heroine, Leucippe, is kidnapped by bandits—the dreaded *Boukoloï* that inhabit the Nile Delta—and the hero, Clitophon, thinks he sees her die, as he, helpless, is forced to watch the bandits take a young woman (whom he erroneously identifies as Leucippe) tie her to a tree, disembowel her, and eat her cooked remains—all this described in most horrific detail: “he next raised a sword and plunged it into her heart and then sawed all the way down to her abdomen. Her viscera leaped out. The attendants pulled out her entrails and carried them in their hands over to the altar. When it

---

<sup>31</sup> In the Hellenistic world, descent and ascent motifs (especially in literature) were predominant. Carol Zaleski in *Otherworlds Journeys: Accounts of Near-Death Experience in Medieval and Modern Times*, argues that the most dramatic instances of such motifs “occur in the Gnostic literature of the Hellenized Near East, where we find a dazzling assortment of otherworld journey legends, brilliantly reflecting a syncretic alloy of Persian dualism, Babylonian astrology, Jewish apocalyptic, Christian or pre-Christian soteriology, and Greek philosophy from the Orphic-Pythagorean-Syonic-Platonic vein. These tales are shaped by conviction that the world is the work of a malevolent demiurge (sometimes identified with the god of the Hebrew scriptures), whose fondest wish is to trap spirits in the prison of matter and prevent their return to the fullness (*pleroma*) [πληρωμα] of divine being” (20).

was well done they carved the whole lot up, and all the bandits shared the meal” (216).

In the same romance, the heroine’s violent trials and uncertain fate are foreshadowed in two incidents—a disturbing dream, and an elaborate description of a painting depicting the tale of Andromeda and Prometheus. In the case of the first sign, Leucippe’s mother, Pantheia, is forewarned of her daughter’s clandestine affair with Clitophon in an ominous dream, according to which “a bandit with a naked sword seizes her daughter, drags her away, throws her down, on her back, and slices her in two all the way up from her stomach, making his first insertion at her modest spot” (201). Leucippe’s mother, awoken by the horrid premonition, storms into the room of her daughter where she uncovers the clandestine affair. After the public humiliation Leucippe suffers from her mother, having caught the couple in the heroine’s chamber, she and Clitophon decide to elope. Upon surviving their first shipwreck and reaching safe soil at Pelusium, however, they observe a most striking painting at the temple of Zeus Kasios, which alerts both readers and the young protagonists to the couple’s sinister fate.

[. . .] the figures were Andromeda and Prometheus. Both were prisoners (this was obviously what ked the painter to link them), and their situations corresponded in various particulars: both were chained to rocks; both were tormented by a wild beast, one from the air the other from the sea. [. . .] There is a curious blend of beauty and terror on her face: fear appears on her cheeks, yet a bloomlike beauty rests in her eyes. [. . .] The artist had enhanced her beauty with this touch of lovely fear, [. . .] [and] between the

monster and the girl Perseus was drawn descending from the air, in the direction of the beast. [. . .] In his left hand he held Gorgon's head, wielding it like a shield. Even as a painting it was a frightening object, with eyes starting out of their sockets, and serpentine hair about the temples all writhing erect: a graphic delineation of intimidation. (212).

The painting provides several signs of disaster and turmoil (and others than the ones described in the quoted narrative above) that soon appear in the course of the trials of the couple and function as premonitions to their fate, although only recognized by the reader as the protagonists remain oblivious to the significance of the story depicted in the painting. In Book five, two unlucky omens again forewarn the hero of imminent, although unclear, danger temporarily stopping him and his crew from visiting the island of Pharos: a hawk pursuing a swallow collides with Leucippe, and then they immediately see a picture of Tereus and the rape of Philomela, the tale of which Clitophon describes in great detail to Leucippe.

The plot of the drama was there in every detail—the robe, Tereus, the banquet. A maid was holding the unfolded robe; Philomela stood beside her and pointed to the pictures she had wove; Prokne nodded that she understood; her eyes glowed fiercely and angrily at the picture. King Tereus of Thrace was embroidered there, wrestling Philomela to his lust; her hair had been torn, her waistband broken, her dress ripped open, one breast exposed; she planted her right hand against his eyes and with her left tried to hold the torn shreds of her garment across her breasts. Tereus held Philomela tightly in his arms, drawing her body as close as he could to his own and tightening his embrace on her flesh—so

deftly the artist designed this figured weft. The rest of the icon showed the women showing Tereus his dinner—scraps in a basket—the head and hands of his infant son. They are laughing, at the same time terrified. (234).

The horrific details of the ekphrasis detailing the rape of Philomela are sure indications of the imminent disasters that are to follow in the narrative.<sup>32</sup> The next day, Leucippe, Clitophon, and crew visit the island of Pharos, where Leucippe is seized by pirates; Clitophon and some local shipmen follow them with the hero's ship, hoping to release the heroine from bondage. As it looks like Clitophon's ship is getting closer, however, the pirates appear to bring Leucippe on deck, cut off her head, and toss her body into the sea, while Clitophon looks in horror. The crew of Clitophon's ship stops long enough to collect the torso (but not the head) and is soon forced to give up the chase when another ship comes to help the pirates. This seeming death of the heroine comes as no great surprise, after the first mock-capture and slaughtering of Leucippe; it does, however, alter the course of the events significantly, as Clitophon, believing his beloved dead, marries Melite, a young Egyptian widow. Towards the end of the eighth and final book, in a sudden twist of fate Leucippe turns up as a slave in Melite's household, allowing for a convenient reunion between hero and heroine.

Once seized by bandits, the fate of hero and heroine is marked by a number of disasters that alter the narrative course and create serious doubts about the salvation of Leucippe and Clitophon. The couple is usually separated and

---

<sup>32</sup> Shadi Bartsch discusses the employment of such descriptive passages like the one of Andromeda and Prometheus in the Greek novelistic romances and how, considered against a backdrop of rhetorical and literary practices of the time and place, they must be seen as devices to invite interpretive activity on the part of contemporary readers—and by extension the characters in the text (1989: 3-39).

then is either sold to wealthy merchants as potential servants (to whose hands also suffer physical and emotional torments) or auctioned to individuals who put their chastity up for a sale. In either case, the hero or heroine becomes the subject of the erotic advances of their masters which cause an internal inferno, as hero and heroine struggle devise numerous strategies to protect their chastity. Frye understands the emphasis on virginity in the Greek novelistic romances on social grounds and explains, “a man often assumes that he ought to get a virgin at marriage, otherwise he may feel that he has acquired a second-hand possession” (78), before proceeding to explain the role of chastity in the narrative of the Greek novelistic romances:

[. . .] deep within the stock convention of virgin-baiting is a vision of human integrity imprisoned in a world it is in but not of, often forced by weakness into all kinds of ruses and stratagems, yet always managing to avoid the one fate which really is worse than death, the annihilation of one’s identity. [. . .] What is symbolized as a virgin is actually a human conviction, however expressed, that there is something at the core of one’s infidelity fragile being which is not only immortal but has discovered the secret of invulnerability that eludes to the tragic hero. (86).

Descriptions of such attempts on the part of the protagonists to preserve their chastity resemble a very popular genre that flourished approximately during the same time with the Greek romances—hagiography. In the Greek romances the physical and emotional torments of the heroine are often expressed in allegorical terms—resembling the spirituality of the hagiographic genre—and the

evil intentions of the capricious masters are often attributed to diabolical influence.

The trials that surround the preservation of the heroine's chastity are narrated in most detailed terms in *Aithiopeka* (*Aith.*). Tarsia, the long abandoned daughter of Apollonius (the hero) is taken to Mytilene by pirates who put her up for sale in a slave market. There, a particularly vile pimp gets into the bidding war for her with Athenagora, the local king, and the pimp finally buys her for over a hundred thousand gold sesterces. Tarsia, in turn, is taken to the house of the pimp where she is informed that her virginity is now up for sale for a half pound of gold. When the young heroine is left alone with her first customer, however, her pleas and the story of her misfortunes persuade him, instead of taking her virginity to give her forty pieces of gold. As the day progresses, each customer, instead of having sex with Tarsia, listens to her tales of woe and, "one after another, [her customers] went in, paid a gold coin each, and left in tears" (760).

In *Ephesian Tale*, (*Ephes.*) hero and heroine (Habrocomes and Anthia) are separated soon after their wedding by pirates who seize their ship and burn it. The couple, like Tarsia in *Aith.*, is offered to the chief-pirate, Aspyrtus, as servants, and from that point on their fates take different courses as a number of suitors fall in love with both protagonists and force them to move to different locations around the Levant. Anthia and Habrocomes' trials and emotional torments are described in such vivid detail, that they could have been taken out of

the narrative of a hagiographic vita as clear references to the miraculous, which are recurrent and explicit throughout the narrative.

In an effort to avoid the pressing marriage-invitations of a suitor, Anthia consumes what she thinks is a deadly drug in order to commit suicide on her wedding day, but the drug is merely a sleeping potion, and thus she is entombed alive.<sup>33</sup> When she awakes she is saved by robbers, to whom she declares she has been a sacrifice to two gods, Love and Death (152), but instead of leaving her to die, the grave-robbers take her as a slave and sail to Alexandria, where she is sold to slave-dealers who auction her; there, Anthia is eventually bought by the Indian Psammis who would have raped her, except that she cleverly tells him she is consecrated to Isis for a year. This is only the beginning of her horrific trials, however, since shortly afterwards the heroine is thrown into a pit with wild dogs as a punishment for her refusal to give in to a bandit's desires (which, consequently, lead to his death).

While in the pit, and quite miraculously, Anthia remains unharmed by the wild dogs due to divine providence and the good services of Amphinomos, the robber who was assigned to the pit as a guard. Amphinomos, we learn, falls in love with the heroine and "found a way of keeping her alive and stopping the dogs from molesting her; every so often she would remove the planks from over the trench and throw in bread, give her water, and so keep her spirits up. By

---

<sup>33</sup> The subterranean world into which the heroine is confined is a popular literary motif that bears Christian significance and symbolism. Northrop Frye, in *The Secular Scripture*, alludes to the influence of Christianity especially in the conception and development of the Greek novelistic romance noting, "the lower world may be submarine as well as subterranean: the sea is particularly the image of an unconscious which seems paradoxically to forget everything and yet potentially to remember everything. [. . .] The Biblical myth [of objects fallen into the sea and recovered by fishermen] has parallels in the Jonah story and in the elaborate fishing imagery of the Gospels, where the descent of Christ to a lower world is given a submarine dimension as he and his disciples become 'fishers of men'" (148).

feeding the dogs he prevented them from doing her any harm; soon they were tame and docile” (158). The resemblance to the story of Daniel in the lion’s den is clear, and so is a parallel with story of Absalom in a following episode in the romance, where Anthia is captured by a band of robbers who have a custom of hanging the victim from a tree and throwing javelins at her.<sup>34</sup>

After escaping yet another near-death experience, the heroine’s determination to reunite with her beloved Habrocomes increases, along with the obstacles that stand in the way of the couple’s happiness. Amid further shipwreck and abductions, Anthia becomes prey to Polydius, another bandit yet. Once the wife of Polydius discovers of her husband’s infatuation with Anthia, she beats the heroine mercilessly and then offers her to a servant by the name of Clytus to take to Italy and sell to a brothel-keeper in Tarentum (also in Italy). There, Anthia is forced to exhibit herself in a house of prostitution, but she manages to save her virtue by feigning an attack of epilepsy.

Habrocomes also undergoes similar trials in an effort to preserve his chastity and reunite with his beloved, although not with as much success. At the same time when Anthia is prey to Psammis, Habrocomes’ vessel is shipwrecked and he captured by herdsmen-brigands and sold into slavery (for the second time). The hero is bought by an old retired soldier called Araxus, who treats him like a son, but his wife, Kyno, who is exceedingly ugly, falls in love with Habrocomes

---

<sup>34</sup> In his analysis of romance as a genre in *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance*, Frye links several manifestations of the sinister and the dystopian in the Hellenistic romances to the rise of Christianity. “Most of what goes on in the night world of romance,” he argues, “is cruelty and horror, yet what is essential is not cruelty as such but the presence of some kind of ritual. In another Greek romance, *Ephesiaca*, by Xenophon of Ephesus, [. . .] there is a series of demonic ordeals with a strong resemblance to those in the descent myths of the Bible, including the stories of Joseph and Daniel and the Passion of Christ. Many centuries later, Chaucer, putting his heroine Constance, in *The Man of Law’s Tale* through similar tribulations, deliberately inserts the biblical parallels” (113).

and he nearly give in to her (since he realizes that his past virtue did not take him very far). When Kyno kills her husband, however, Habrocomes refuses her and she tells the authorities that Habrocomes committed the murder for which he is arrested and taken to Alexandria.

Once in Alexandria, the hero is ordered crucified, but, while on the cross, he prays to the Nile and the Sun and “a sudden gust of wind arose and struck the cross, sweeping away the subsoil of the cliff where it had been fixed.

Habrocomes fell into the torrent and was swept away; the water did him no harm; his fetters did not get in his way; nor did the river creatures do him any harm as he passed, but the current guided him along” (155). Having survived the crucifixion by a miracle, the hero is then sentenced to be burned at the stake, but amid prayers “the Nile rose in spite, and the surge of water struck the pyre and put out the flames. To those who witnessed it the event seemed like a miracle” (156).

The influence of Christianity on early-antique secular genres such as that of romance is artfully explained in Frye’s *Secular Scripture*, where the author notes that, “Christian mythology expanded to include a large body of romance, including many saints’ lives and such apocryphal stories as the Harrowing of Hell. [. . .] the literature of a polytheistic mythology can emphasize certain cults or even absorb or promote new one, just as Christianity could use legend to enhance the prestige of a specific saint or shrine (13).

Crucifixion and the burning of the hero or heroine at the stake feature not only as means of punishment, but also as proof of spiritual revelation, chastity, and purity (all important traits) of the often un-heroic Hellenistic protagonists.

Both methods of torture are employed in three other Greek novelistic romances—*Aith.*, *CC*, and *AR*. In *Aith.*, the magical and the supernatural are indeed manifestation of the miraculous. The hopes of the heroine, Charicleia, to reunite with her beloved Theagenes, are rekindled by the ominous words of an old woman who uses magic to reanimate her dead son. The “revived” dead man, in turn, reassures his mother that Charicleia will indeed have a happy reunion and life with the youth she is searching for, but further trials are in store for the couple before their reunion. The ominous words of the deceased youth prove accurate, since the heroine is soon ordered to be burned at the stake.

Charicleia, unlike Habrocomes, the hero of *Aith.*, goes to the pyre of her free will and enters the flames, but the flames avoid her: “There she stood for some time without taking any hurt. The flames flowed around her rather than licking against her; they caused her no harm but drew back wherever she moved towards them, serving merely to encircle her in splendor and present a vision of her standing in radiant beauty in a frame of light, like a bride in a chamber of flame” (526); as it is revealed shortly afterward, this is because she is wearing one of the jewels left among her birth tokens, the fabulous ring, “set with a jewel called pantarbe and inscribed with certain sacred characters; it is full, it seems, of a supernatural and mystic property, which I think must have endowed the stone with the power to repel fire and bestow immunity from the flames on its wearer. This is what saved my life no doubt, by the gods’ grace” (529).

This escape from imminent death is only temporary, as it appears, since the couple is subjected again to further trials in the hands of the Indian priests—

the Gymnosophists—who carry out a preliminary test that will determine Charicleia’s and Theagenes’ chastity or lack of it, thereof. The young protagonists are forced to step on a gold gridiron which instantly burns all those who have had sexual relations. Theagenes steps into the gridiron first and “everyone was impressed, not simply by his beauty and stature, but more especially by the fact that a young man such as he, in the full vigor of his youth, was ignorant of the joys of Aphrodite” (564). Charicleia, in turn, “let her hair all free, ran forward like one possessed, and sprang onto the gridiron, where she stood for some time without taking any hurt, her beauty dazzling with a new and dazzling radiance as she stood conspicuous on her lofty pedestal; in her magnificent robe she seemed more like an image of a goddess than a mortal woman” (564). It is not until Charicleia and Theagenes pass the test, however, that the Gymnosophists start to withdraw out of revulsion at the coming human sacrifice.

In book three of Chariton’s *CC* the villain who had abducted Challirhoe, Theron, is crucified in front of Callirhoe’s tomb, “and from his cross he looked out on that sea over which he had carried as a captive the daughter of Hermocrates, whom even the Athenians had not taken” (57-58); Chaereas, the hero, is also condemned to the cross by a band of pirates, but his friends Mirthidetes and Polycharmus accidentally mention Challirhoe’s name and Chaereas’ relationship to her, and the hero’s life is spared. “They called for whips; fire was brought preparations were made for torture,” (67) yet, Chaereas, eventually, with the assistance of his comrades “climbed down from his cross—

with sorrow in his heart, for he was to be leaving a life of misery and ill-starred love” (69). Alexander the Great in the anonymous *AR* also subjects the two assassins of the Persian King Darius (Bessos and Ariobarzanes) to the same torment, namely, crucified on Darius’s grave, declaring: “‘I swore I would see you were marked out and notable before everyone, that is, that you would be crucified for everyone to see,’ [and] at these words everyone cheered him, and the detestable murderers were crucified at Darius’ grave” (703).

Desired and unsuccessfully attempted suicide actions or “self-killing undertaken as a definite initiative” (46), as MacAlister translates the acts, occur repeatedly in the Greek novelistic romances, especially in the face of despair over the perceived loss or death of the other or a threatened union with another (which, in itself amounts to loss of the other). In Heliodorus’ *Aith.*, Theagenes, distraught by the belief that his beloved Charicleia has been consumed by the terrible blaze that followed the attack of the pirates in the second Book of the romance, reaches for his sword and attempts to take his own life, while lamenting in a most dramatic way the loss of his beloved:

Theagenes smote his brow and tore his hair. “Let this day be my last!” he cried. ‘Let this be the end and undoing of all things—fear, danger, anxiety, hope, love. Charikleia is dead, and Theagenes is no more. Fate is against me. I played the coward, but in vain. In vain did I betray my manhood in abject flight, trying to save my life for your sake. [. . .] That incomparable beauty had been reduced to ashes, so that not even your dead body remains to preserve a trace of your perfect loveliness. How cruel

the divinity is! I cannot find words to express it jealous malice. Even a last embrace is denied me. I am cheated even of a final, lifeless kiss!’ With these words, he looked round for his sword. (379).

Anthia, the heroine of Xenophon’s *Ephes.*, is in a similar plight with young Theagenes—convinced that her beloved Habrocomes is dead, she faces an even greater obstacle in avoiding an arranged marriage to a local office in Cilicia by the name of Perilaos. In an effort to avoid the pressing marriage-invitations of a suitor, Anthia consumes what she thinks is a deadly drug in order to commit suicide, but the drug, which she takes on her wedding day, is merely a sleeping potion, and thus she is entombed alive.

And already it was night, and the bridal chamber was being made ready; and those whose duty it was arrived to escort Anthia. She went out in tear against her will, hiding the potion in her hand; [. . .] ‘Habrocomes, my darling,’ she cried, ‘I am discharging my promises and am on my way to you; it is a sad road, but an inevitable one; welcome me gladly and make my life with you in the other world a happy one.’ With this she drank the drug and immediately fell into a deep sleep; she collapsed to the ground, and the drug took its full effect. (150-51).<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> Suzanne MacAlister cites several instances of conscious suicide attempts on the parts of the Hellenistic protagonists in *Dreams and Suicides: The Greek Novel from Antiquity to the Byzantine Empire*. “For example, Theagenes attempts to kill himself with a sword in his belief that the corpse he was embracing was Charikleia’s (*Aith.* 2.4.1-5.1); Daphnis threatens to die when he learns Chloe had been kidnapped (*DC* 2.22.4); Chloe threatens to end her life following the discovery of Daphnis’ identity, in her belief that she had lost him (*DC* 4.27.2); Kleitophon attempts to kill himself with a sword after witnessing Leukippe’s first ‘death’ by sacrifice (*LK* 3.17.1-4); Kleitophon tells Kleinias that he has decided to do away with himself following the report of Leukippe’s third ‘death’ (*LK* 7.6.1); Chaireas says he will kill himself after he has been told of Kallirhoe’s ‘adultery’ (*CK* 1.4.7); Chaireas tries to kill himself after Kallirhoe’s ‘death’ (*CK* 1.5.2); Chaireas visits Kallirhoe’s tomb with the intention of killing himself following her entombment (*CK* 3.3.1); Kallirhoe threatens to die following the report of the burning of Chaireas’ ship (*CK* 3.10.4);

When she wakes up, however, she is “saved” by robbers, to whom she declares she has been a sacrifice to two gods, Love and Death (152), but instead of leaving her to die, the grave-robbers take her as a slave and sail to Alexandria, where, like most Greek heroines, is given to slave dealers.<sup>36</sup>

In the romances of Lucian (*TS*) and Antonius Diogenes (*WT*) dystopian realms are found in the fringes of the known world and are an amalgam of Christian divination and eschatology, manifested in the fates of the protagonists (who are being consumed by whales, dragons, and other hyperbolic monsters in their quest for knowledge and salvation) and in Greco-Roman folkloric tradition (evident in the author’s propensity towards exaggeration and deformity, especially when describing fantastical terrains and their inhabitants).<sup>37</sup>

---

Chaireas submits himself to crucifixion in Karia, after learning of Kallirhoe’s marriage to Dionysios (*CK* 4.3.9); during the episode in Babylon, after Chaireas sees Kallirhoe married to Dionysios, he attempts and threatens to kill himself on several occasions (*CK* 5.9.6-10, 6.2. 8-11, 7.1.6-9); Kallirhoe threatens to die following the report of the burning of Chaireas’ ship (*CK* 3.10.4); Kallirhoe pleads that she be killed and asks for a sword to kill herself when she is told that the commander of the Egyptian fleet (in fact, Chaireas) intends to marry her (*CK* 7.6); Habrocomes and Anthia resolve to kill themselves when both are faced with unwelcome unions with pirates (*Eph.* 2.1.3-6); Habrocomes seeks ways to kill himself in prison knowing that he cannot have Anthia (*Eph.* 2.7.1); Habrocomes threatens to kill himself when he learns of Anthia’s ‘death’ in Perilaos’ bridal chamber (*Eph.* 3.10.3); Habrocomes submits himself to crucifixion in Egypt in the belief that Anthia too is dead (*Eph.*, 4.2.2); Anthia seeks a way to kill herself following her dream that she had lost Habrocomes to another woman (*Eph.* 5.8.8-9)” (48-49).

<sup>36</sup> It should be noted here that by the Hellenistic times, slavery had become as lucrative a trade as piracy—slaves were in fact the pirates’ most important booty and source of income. “The old Greek regions, like western Asia Minor, were dependent on slaves for running the large country estates. Mining implied slaves, as did public building work. House slaves and personal servants were a matter of course in the higher strata of society. Besides prisoners of war, it was the victims of pirate and robber attacks and kidnappings that satisfied the demands of the slave market. Greeks, Syrians, and other Orientals were quicker to learn and easier to handle than barbarians from the West and the North and were consequently in greater demand, not least in Rome. Thus, the activity of pirates and robbers was not just a marginal problem, acute only for merchants and their economic considerations. It meant a real and frightening insecurity for all who traveled and for people of all classes who lived in exposed districts like coasts and islands. Personal liberty was transient, the wheel of fortune could turn instantly: today free, tomorrow a slave” (Haag 85-86).

<sup>37</sup> Northrop Frye explores the origins of romance as a genre in *Secular Scripture* and concludes that, “romance is the structural core of all fiction: being directly descended from folktale, it brings us closer than any other aspect of literature to the sense of fiction, considered as a whole, as the epic of the creature,

In *TS* narrator and crew are swallowed up by a monstrous whale and spend two days in the belly of the beast, which resembles a fantastical microcosm of a medieval wilderness, populated with different tribes of human-like creatures, demons, and armies of fish, “unfriendly and monstrous in shape” (632).<sup>38</sup> Secular versions of journeys inside monsters are widespread in western literature from Lucian to our day. Frye, in *The Anatomy of Criticism*, notes that, “perhaps even the Trojan horse had originally some links with the same theme. The image of the dark winding labyrinth for the monster’s belly is a natural one, and one that frequently appears in heroic quests, notably that of Theseus. [ . . . ] In any solar myths, too, the hero travels perilously through a dark labyrinthine underworld full of monsters between sunset and sunrise. This theme may become a structural principle of fiction on any level of sophistication” (190).

The elderly man from Cyprus, whom the narrator meets in the belly of the whale, informs him of the topography of the “terrain” they occupy and the cannibalistic tendencies of the tribes that inhabit it:

---

man’s vision of his own life as a quest. Romance, as a whole, provides a parallel epic in which the themes of shipwreck, pirates, enchanted islands, magic, recognition, the loss and regaining of identity, occur constantly, as they do in the last four romances of Shakespeare” (15).

<sup>38</sup> The whale that swallows Lucian and his crew bears obvious similarities with the biblical beast, Leviathan. “In the Bible we have a sea-monster usually named leviathan, who is destined to kill the ‘day of the lord.’ The leviathan is the source of social sterility, for it is identified with Egypt and Babylon, the oppressors of Israel, and is described in the Book of Job as ‘king over the children of pride.’ It also seems closely associated with the natural sterility of the fallen world, with the blasted world of struggle and poverty and disease into which Job is hurled by Satan and Adam by the serpent in Eden. In the Book of Job, God’s revelation to Job consists largely of descriptions of the leviathan and a slightly less sinister land cousin named behemoth. These monsters thus apparently represent the fallen order of nature over which Satan has some control. [ . . . ] In the Book of Revelation the leviathan, Satan, and the Edenic serpent are all identified. This identification is the basis for an elaborate dragon-killing metaphor in Christian symbolism in which the hero is Christ (often represented in art standing on a prostrate monster), the dragon Satan, the impotent old king Adam, whose son Christ becomes, and the rescued bride the Church” (189).

‘[. . .] The neighbors who live near us are unpleasant, offensive, unsociable savages.’ [. . .] ‘The western part of the wood, by the tail, is the land of the Saltfish, a tribe with eels’ eyes and lobsters’ faces; they are warlike and fierce, and they eat raw flesh. Of the sides, the starboard wall is a possession of the Sea-satyrs, who are human in their upper parts and like lizards below; they are not so lawless as the rest. (623).

Equally horrific and fantastical descriptions of lands found past the Pillars of Hercules occur in the narrative of *TS*, which resembles a fictional and much exaggerated medieval travelogue. The most memorable of these descriptions is the “Island of the Vines.” Eighty days into their voyage, narrator and crew reach an island in the heart of which lie vines with anthropomorphic characteristics and bestial instincts. The vines manage to seduce the men with kisses that arouse sensuality and bestial behavior.

[The vines] also kissed us, and anyone who was kissed became drunk immediately and began to stagger about. But they would not let us pluck the fruit, crying out in pain as we tugged at it. Some of them even evinced sexual passion; two of my comrades embraced them, only to find themselves caught by the genitals and unable to free themselves. They became one with the plants and took root beside them; their fingers at once put forth shoots, tendrils grew all over them, and they too were on the point of bearing fruit. (623).

Desires and frustrations received an important impetus from long isolation at sea or in the vast regions of the steppe or the desert in the narrative of the Greek romances. Similarly, wild fantasies about unusual forms of eroticism and violent

longings for—as well fear of—willing women were written about frequently. *AR*, *TS* and *WT* introduce creatures that inhabit the periphery of normal life and dwell repeatedly on the unbridled lust of the natives of the unknown lands. The inhabitants of these dystopian terrains give in to every urge and are more interested in satisfying their carnal desires than in practicing a trade or occupying themselves with science or art. Being usually naked, they are constantly prepared to engage in the most forthright copulation with anyone at all, for they indulge in complete promiscuity and incest.

Antonius Diogenes seems to have derived his fabulous matter from fictional and pseudo-geographical accounts, from fictional utopias, and from earlier tales of travel of varying authenticity, although “a good deal might of course be ascribed to the inventiveness of the author himself,” Tomas Hagg theorizes.

This complicated pattern of intrigue woven round the principal characters made it possible for him to combine within one and the same tale all the conceivable routes across the known world as well as beyond its frontiers—a sort of sum, then, of the whole genre: the ultimate snowball. So long and comprehensive a tale could not conceivably have consisted of the adventures of one single traveler—the genre’s basic pattern—without becoming excessively monotonous. The filtering of the experiences through several characters, who stand in various kinds of relationship to each other, and the excessive use of the story-within-a-story technique, were Antonius’ solution to the problem of creating at the time variety and unity. (Hagg 121).

Photius, the writer of the summary of the 24 Books of Diogenes' *WT* that no longer survive, tells us that he cites at the beginning of his summary the names of the persons who treated the subject previously so that the incredible events would appear credible. This undermines the fiction of the discovery of the text in a tomb, especially as the only source named by Photius, Antiphanes of Berga, was a notorious liar.

In Antonius Diogenes' *WT*, magic, resurrection and deformity become recurrent *topoi* of the dystopian in the narrative. The first unorthodox statement of the *Wonder Beyond Thule* (*Απιστά Υπερ Θουλην*) that Photius presents his readers with, is its title; this romance is defined not by its central pair of lovers, as are most of the other romances (*Chaereas and Callirhoe*, *Leucippe and Clitophon*), but instead by the teratological wonders or *apista* (*απιστά*).<sup>39</sup> Photius's summary of the original narrative emphasizes a few violent and supernatural episodes that inspire terror.<sup>40</sup> The narrator tells of Paapis, an Egyptian priest who employs magic and transforms people (including the heroine, Decryllis, and her brother) by spitting in their faces so that they appear dead

---

<sup>39</sup> J. R. Morgan notes that even before the time that *WT* was written, there existed a whole subgenre of *απιστά* (amazing or wonder) literature, "travelers' tales of the 'fact is stranger than fiction' type, the whole appeal of which was that the *incredibilia* in which it dealt were actually true. This strand begins with Herodotus, and is satirized by Lucian in his *True Histories*. Doubtless, many of the marvels were fabricated, but their value as entertainment would be negated if the reader acknowledged it. So to proclaim incredibility was to claim truthfulness. By setting a romantic fiction within this paradoxographical framework, Antonius produced a novel whose plausibility as fiction rested directly on implausibility as fact. This was reinforced by a convoluted apparatus of authorization, detailing how an autobiographical document had been buried in the protagonist's grave, later discovered, and was now being published for the first time" (196).

<sup>40</sup> The contents of the twenty-four books of Antonius Diogenes' *The Wonders Beyond Thule* or *Τὰ Υπερ Θουλην Απιστά*, have survived only in a poor summary provided by the 9<sup>th</sup> century patriarch of Constantinople, Photius. Photius ran a reading circle, the members of which read various works of literature which they then summarized for the benefit of the others. These summaries and commentaries were eventually recorded by Photius for his absent brother.

during the day and revived at night, and of the supposed discovery of Diogenes' original narrative by Alexander the Great himself!

The effect of hybridization is practically inescapable in *AR*, *WT*, and *TS*. In the context of describing the unknown, similarities based on the features of the known inevitably result in such perverse "literary collages," destroying the coherence of the alien subject in order to transmit a visualized image. Alexander reports of "men called Phytoi ["plantmen"], 24 cubits tall, with necks 1 ½ cubits long, and likewise with long feet [and] arms and hands [that] were like saws" (36);<sup>41</sup> similarly, Lucian, in *TS*, describes births coming from men and pregnancies occurring "not in the womb but in the calf of the leg, for after conception the calf grows fat," and continues with the resurrection of a lifeless offspring: "after a time they cut [the calf] open and bring out a lifeless body, which they lay out with its mouth open facing the wind and bring to life" (627-28). And as if these wonders are not convincing enough of the monstrosities that occupy in the periphery of normal life, he reports on the unorthodox reproductive practices of a breed of humanoids Lucian calls "Treemen":

They cut off a man's right testicle and plant it ground; from it there grows an enormous tree of flesh, like a phallus. It has branches and foliage, and its fruit is acorns as long as the forearm. When they are ripe, they harvest them and carve men from them, adding

---

<sup>41</sup> The most significant source of teratological wonders and marvels of the East (of all surviving Greek novelistic romances) are two letters sent by Alexander and addressed to his mother Olympias and his teacher, Aristotle, that survive in a Latin recession titled, *Alexander's Letter to Aristotle* (see W. W. Boer's text *Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem ad Codicum Fidem Edita*, The Hague, 1953). These letters cast Alexander as not only as a conqueror, but as a champion of Hellenistic science.

genitals of ivory or of wood for the poorest ones; these are what they use to consummate their male marriages. (628).

The features of these organic marvels manifest characteristically grotesque principles like hyperbolic dimensions, multiplication of body parts, and fusion of species.

Diogenes' book bears many similarities with the earlier Greek novelistic romances, such as those parts of the traveling pattern that are restricted to the Mediterranean region;<sup>42</sup> the role played by surprising incidents, oracles, and cruel pursuers (as in Iambichus) in determining these travels. Tomas Haag claims that "the erotic motif seems to be of secondary importance in Antonius Diogenes (love-affairs are mentioned two or three times, in passing in Photius' summary)" arguing that, "in the novels the tone is mostly serious and idealistic, in Antonius it was in all probability light, possibly even parodic as in Lucian's *True Story*; otherwise it is difficult to imagine how the most fantastic details could have been presented as part of the main characters' own experiences. The relative realism of the novels, with known geographic surroundings and few supernatural incidents, is in strong contrast to the overly fabulous contents of this traveler's tale" (120).<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>42</sup> Antonius Diogenes' *WT* and Lucian's *TS* consist of long voyages into a realm which has been variously designated by James Romm, among others, as "Menippean satire, comic fiction, or even science fiction" (202-03). Romm notes that "it is as if the authors of these two texts were taking advantage of the license Strabo had granted to Bergaeon writings, the right to invent *thaumata* [wonders] candidly without incurring critical disdain. At the same time both [authors] seem aware that the explorer text cannot ever be wholly relegated to the ranks of fiction, and that the very act of composing a fabulous *periplous* works to undermine the rigid *historia/muthos* distinctions on which much of ancient criticism was based" (204).

<sup>43</sup> J. R. Morgan, argues that the readers of Antonius' *WT* (and of all other Greek novelistic romances, consequently) were well-aware of the conventions of the genre and the intentions of the Greek writers: "if no one in the ancient world successfully theorized the dynamics of novel-reading, the instinctive competence of actual readers was, as ever, more advanced than any theoretical analysis. The dynamics are

The dystopian is manifested in *TS* in unsuccessful acts of self-killing and in a variety of subconscious guises, ranging from dreams and omens to hallucinations and offers a testimony to the Greek romances' social and cultural context. MacAlister notes that the

[. . .] the uses of the dream as a narratological device rest on the novelists' manipulation of a reader-consciousness of cultural rules and patterns surrounding the correct identification of types of dreams and, contingent on such identification, interpretation of the symbols and messages. The future-oriented dream in both the novel's contemporary cultural context and in its inherited literary tradition represents an attempt to impose certainty on uncertainty. The novelists' dramatic uses of self-killing likewise rest upon their manipulation of a reader consciousness, this time of the phenomenon's meanings in inherited discourse and tradition. (83).

Heliodoros's *Aithiopia* is the last novelistic romance of love, travel, and adventure (among the surviving texts) to have been written in antiquity, yet it doesn't quite mark the end of a popular genre. After an interval of some 800 years the genre suddenly reappears, as if nothing, or next to nothing, had happened in between. From the 12<sup>th</sup> century—the century of the Komnenian Dynasty, one of the renaissance periods of Byzantium—we know of four romances, written in a learned literary Greek (in contrast to the popular language of the age): one in prose, *Hysmine and Hysminias* [*HH*] by Eustathios Macrembolites, and three in verse: *Rhodanthe and Dosikles* [*RD*] by Theodore

---

clearly written into the novels themselves, which both proclaim and pretend to conceal their fictionality, both make-believe and make believe" (197).

Prodromus, *Aristandros and Kallithea* [AK] by Constantine Manasses (of which only fragments survive), and *Drosilla and Charikles* [DC] by Niketas Eugenianos.<sup>44</sup>

Contrasting the world God intended in His creation with the hard reality of the existing world, ruled by the devil and his cohorts is one of the chief stylistic principles informing Byzantine secular literature and art.<sup>45</sup> The charm of the monstrous and marvelous data that accumulated around the borders of the known world was not to be denied in the Komnenian and Palaiologan Byzantium (neither accepted in its violent and heathen expression in the novelistic romances) and so it was allegorized. Christianity, in other words, far from dismissing the Greek novelistic romances for their pagan and erotic content, actually incorporated several thematic and stylistic details into their own (Byzantine) belief system. Whether, however, “this was a judicious move in the light of their continuing circulation or whether the [Greek novelistic romances] were taken for granted as spiritual allegories in the earlier period for which we have no evidence for their allegorical treatment can only be a matter of speculation” (MacAlister 111).

Byzantine writers of sacred and secular literature, thus, attached allegorical and eschatological meanings to the literary marvels they inherited from

---

<sup>44</sup> Extended non-factual narration in prose was the last addition to the family of classical Greek literary genres. The complete novelistic romances, along with translations, and a substantial corpus of newly-discovered fragments is found in B. P. Reardon, ed., *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* (1989).

<sup>45</sup> The model for these contrasts between heavenly ideal and earthly reality was supplied by St Augustine. Juxtaposing the *civitas terrene* (earthly state) with the *civitas dei* (divine state), he argued that the blissfulness of everlasting life could only be proven through the saddening portrayal of the deprivation of earthly life (God had known that evil would emerge in the world: it was part of His design, and therefore it had meaning). Only by contrasting it with evil could the beauty of Creation become apparent.

their Hellenistic predecessors.<sup>46</sup> The practice of reading about monsters and marvels was, by then, centuries old. More specifically, by the 12<sup>th</sup> century, when Manasses, Eugenianos, Makrembolites, and Prodromos were composing their verse romances,

[. . .] the spherical earth and inhabited antipodal regions of the pagan philosophers proved to be theological nightmares for Christian writers, especially during the long absence of Aristotle and Ptolemy, their most compelling expositors. Old Testament cosmography said nothing of a round earth, and the Gospels spoke of the Word of God as available to all men. How then could there be men beneath the burning zone, across which the inhabitants of the *orbis terrarum* could not pass to proselytize? Theological rigor necessitated the construction of a geography more literary than empirical, conforming at whatever cost to the literal and implicit cosmography of Scripture. (Campbell 55).

In the Komnenian and the Palaiologan romances ekphrastic descriptions of dystopian realms abound with Christian symbolism. Allegorized folkloric creatures, supernatural phenomena with apocalyptic associations, and the miraculous powers of the holy relics attest to the influence of Christianity in the

---

<sup>46</sup> In the Christian system, marvels were scandalous because they transformed human beings, created “in God’s image,” into animals. “Marvels consisted in large part of enlargements or distortions of the normal, natural world. Giants, midgets, and creatures with extra appendages were not common but were basically natural. So were fabulous and mythical beasts and, stretching a point, *Mischwesen* and some of the more extreme monstrosities found in the paintings of Bosch, half-human, half-inanimate. Insofar as these were creatures that did not exist but whose existence was possible, they were marvels only to the first degree. But the marvelous was not content merely to surpass nature; there was something in it that was very much anti-nature. The exaggeration and extravagance of marvelous creatures extended beyond the quantitative into the realm of the qualitative. *Metamorphosis*, one of the profound features of the marvelous, eludes characterization in terms of the devices used to produce simple “static” marvels: accentuation, multiplication, association, or distortion” (Le Goff 40-41).

Byzantine renaissance of the genre.<sup>47</sup> Xenophon's *Ephesian Tale* [*Ephes.*], *Apollonius, King of Tyre* [*Apol.*], Manasses's *Aristandros and Kallithea* [*AK*], Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe* [*CC*], and *The Tale of Achilles* [*TA*], all bear significant ties to the distant and the dystopian.

The heathen, Greek novelistic romances, although still very prominent and popular literature eight centuries after their origin, were severely scrutinized under the careful eye of Christian interpreters in the early 12<sup>th</sup> century Byzantium to become acceptable literature. The Byzantine reader no longer perceived sexual innuendoes, bodily violence, and near-death experiences as staples of a genre that flourished 800 years earlier, but instead interpreted such sinister actions as manifestations of Christian piety which was interwoven with sexual imagery—the resemblance in form of the Greek novelistic romances and hagiographical accounts of martyrdom must have read the Christian reader of the Greek novelistic romances to its easy identification within the spiritual sphere.

MacAlister, in *Dream and Suicides: The Greek Novel from Antiquity to the Byzantine Empire*, traces the propensity of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Byzantines to allegorize and appropriate ancient Greek prose-fiction according to Christian doctrine, citing prominent Christian writers such as Symeon the Theologian,

---

<sup>47</sup> I have already discussed how the Greek novelistic romances and their Byzantine counterparts bear close ties with the genres of historiography and hagiography. Both genres influenced the representation of utopian and dystopian visions in medieval secular literature. Visions, revelations, and supernatural or daemonic appearances were a staple ingredient of hagiographic and exemplum literature. Visionary experiences, similar to experiences found in hagiographic accounts, feature in the Greek novelistic romances, in which the hero's life path is remarkably similar to that of a Christian martyr. Byzantine heroines, similarly, often undergo near-death experiences, have prophetic dreams and hallucinations, some of which help them regain inner strength and continue their pursuit of their lost beloved.

who “uses the term *eros* to describe his attitude toward God and calls Christ a bridegroom and the soul his bride with whom Christ unites in marriage so that the soul receives his seed (*Hymnes* 2.467 [no. 39.14] and 1.292-6 [no.15.174-5]). This kind of imagery,” MacAlister continues, “derives particularly from the Song of Songs: a crucial text in establishing its importance in the fourth-century Gregory of Nyssa’s *Homilies* on the book. And, likewise, the similarity—on a superficial level—between the two sorts of narrative in their occurrence of chastity and revelation could well lead to a further identification between the two. Indeed, a kind of allegorisation in which literary texts (particularly Homer) became the subject of ethical reinterpretation was frequently practiced by the Byzantines: allegory was a prominent feature of, for example, the twelfth-century Tzetzes’ work. One might expect, then, that the novel—if it was read—could be subjected to such a treatment. (108).<sup>48</sup>

The threatening natural wonders of the Greek novelistic romances become examples of God’s ingenuity in the 12<sup>th</sup> century Komnenian romances. Such wonders are much less frequently described as cases of “natural erring” in the Byzantine romances. The scene in *Ephes.*, where Hippothoos, enraged, throws Anthia in a pit with wild dogs, bears close affinities with the tortures and sufferings female Christian martyrs underwent for salvation and in an effort to aid

---

<sup>48</sup> MacAlister, in the third chapter of *Dreams and Suicides* entitled “The Novel, the Dream, and ‘Suicide’ in the Interim Period,” also notes the same quotations from both *Leucippe and Clitophon* (by Achilles Tatius) and *Aithopeka* (by Heliodorus) about the force of love “appear unacknowledged side by side in a theological context in a sermon of the seventh century Church Father Maximus the Confessor. In the tenth-century collection of saints’ *Passions and Lives* compiled by Symeon Metaphrastes we encounter several passages in the *Life of Saint Xenophon* describing a storm at sea which have been taken almost verbatim from Achilles Tatius’ *Leucippe and Clitophon*. In the twelfth-century *Life of Saint Cyril Phileotes* by Nikolaos Kataskepenos we find another quotation from *Leucippe and Clitophon* about the wounds of love in a context of the saint healing the sick. Elsewhere Kataskepenos includes consecutive quotations from both *Leucippe and Clitophon* and *Aithiopeka* in the context of a sermon about marriage and continence” (110).

Christian conversion. The heroine is, ultimately, saved from death by the robber Amphinomos, who loves and pities her, an intervention that allows for the continuation of the adventurous plot. Similarly, in Heliodorus' *Aith.*, Charicleia, the heroine, is ordered to be burned at the stake, but when she enters the pyre the flames avoid her. Much later in the narrative the reader learns that the heroine's salvation was due to a jewel she was wearing (a talismanic stone) that was left among her birth tokens.<sup>49</sup>

The popularity of the marvelous and the miraculous is also indicative of an ever-increasing threat the "barbaric" East posed on Byzantium that was divided between its geographic (eastern) and political (western) loyalties. In the Christian system marvels were often perceived as scandalous because they transformed human beings created in God's image into animals and beasts. As a result, the marvelous (*mirabilis*) that formed much of the substance of secular Greek and Roman literature was transformed and appropriated into the miraculous (*admirabilis*), finding its role into sacred or Christian Greek texts.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup> MacAlister discerns social and cultural turmoil and upheavals that preceded the establishment of Byzantium as an independent and powerful entity in the plots of the Byzantine romances. In her third chapter, she argues that Christianity provided individuals with a new sense of social identity and the quest of the individual for this "new self" (although at times disguised as a religious quest, taking an allegorical form) is aptly manifested in the Komnenian romances of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. "On the basis of such foreshadowed changes," MacAlister explains, "it is not hard to see that the Christian world-view will be a very different one from that which informed the [Greek novelistic romances]. This is not to imply that suddenly erupting factors gave rise to an instant change in people's perspectives on life, it is rather to say that changes arose out of already established and enduring expectations and traditions which were to take on new forms and understandings—in much the same way as we witnessed being reflected in the literary microcosm of the [Greek novelistic romances] with its reassembly and re-patterning of established literary components and motifs" (85).

<sup>50</sup> Byzantines were particularly concerned with the contrast between the natural and the supernatural. Monsters were considered portents, signs from God, and were outside the ordinary course of nature. One studied them to learn about Providence, not nature. The marvelous and the monstrous, in turn, were seen either as *nature in jest* or *nature in error*; but either way, they were the products of nature at work.

Similarly, the marvelous occurrences that defined the character and popularity of the Greek novelistic romances underwent severe allegorical interpretation and appropriation in the 12<sup>th</sup> century Byzantium; such occurrences were reinterpreted as examples of God's ingenuity. MacAlister, notably, cites two such allegorical analyses of Heliodorus' *Aithiopeka*. The first is a 12<sup>th</sup> century commentary by a certain Philip Philagathos of Cerami, in Sicily, and the other, a fuller version which offers an introduction to *Aith.*, written by Ioannes Eugenikos around the 15<sup>th</sup> century:

After praising the novel's didacticism and characterization, Philip discusses the allegorical aspect and symbolism, for example: 'Charikleia is a symbol of the soul and the mind which orders it. For her mind signifies a glory [*kleos*] and outward grace [*charis*] which connects with her soul. But it was not only because of this that she was given the name, but because her soul also makes a covenant with her body, becoming one essence with it. And you would understand this more clearly if you counted the units of her name' [. . .]. (109).

In terms of plot and narrative development, the Komnenian romances bear significant similarities with their Hellenistic counterparts. The young protagonists are separated early into the narrative, survive trying ordeals and separations in alien lands, and ultimately return to their homeland and marry. Much like their Hellenistic counterparts, Byzantine heroes and heroines

[. . .] struggle against chance forces in alien and hostile environments contending with every sort of external threat to their

enduring love and commitment to each other; they observe obligations and responsibilities towards pagan gods—for example, Zeus, Apollo, Eros, Hermes, Dionysos—who offer them guidance and revelation. Such a representation allows the Byzantine novelists to comment upon the novelistic discourse in ways in which the ancient novelists could not; that is to say, as an already completed discourse among other discourses, and as one distanced from their own, ‘enlightened’ perspective and time. (MacAlister 116).

Theodore Prodromos’ romance *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, namely, opens with the ambush of the protagonists in an attack by pirates on the town of Rhodes, where hero and heroine are along with many of the natives and a Greek from Cyprus, Kratandros, whom Dosikles befriends. Kratandros’ tale is introduced first: he tells how he was caught in his mistress’s room, and how she had been killed by one of the guards who had mistaken her for him. In his sorrow and remorse, Kratandros pleaded guilty to her murder in the hope of incurring the death penalty, but now acquitted by the court, he is in self-imposed exile. Dosikles, then, reciprocates by telling how he and Rhodanthe came to be in Rhodes, and his tale occupies most of Book two. Kratandros’ narrative, like Dosikles’, begins *in media res*, with the arrival of the pair in the town of Rhodes and their hospitality at the house of a local merchant.

In Book three, Dosikles, within the narrative of Kratandros, retells the story of his wooing and abduction of Rhodanthe as he had earlier told it to his hosts in Rhodes (the third book contains the conclusion of Dosikles’ story, to the point where it links up with the beginning of the main narrative), and the pirate

chief Gobryas, already introduced in Book one as a capricious master, now attempts to seduce Rhodanthe.<sup>51</sup>

At the beginning of Book four, Gobryas threatens to make a human sacrifice of the hero and heroine, but fortunately the satrap's superior officer, Mistylos, receives an ultimatum demanding tribute from Bryaxes, king of Pissa, and the sacrifice is postponed. Mistylos, in turn, who is also the chief of the pirates, and the king of Pissa prepare for war. Book four also describes in detail the reception by the pirate-chief Mistylos and his trusted man Gobryas, of the envoy Artaxanes, who is sent by Bryaxes from Pissa to demand tribute.<sup>52</sup> The envoy is handed over after a formal exchange of letters, to the satrap Gobryas, who is to entertain him royally. Artaxanes, the envoy, is intimidated, however, by the strange feast set before him: a roast lamb is brought to the table and, before all, from its belly flies a flock of live sparrows. Gobryas proceeds to explain that the laws of nature are subject to the will of his master, Mistylos, and goes on to elaborate upon his theme: not only can a "roast lamb be pregnant" with live sparrows, but at Mistylos' command an army of the bravest men in the midst of a battle could find itself suddenly teeming with alien life and giving birth to little dogs. The literal-minded Artaxanes is taken aback by this insinuation of male pregnancy, and the two debate its plausibility. A young acrobat then appears, called Satyrion and, to the spectators' distress, the boy cuts his own throat with a

---

<sup>51</sup> Books three, four, five, and six (of *RD*), constitute the central part of the romance and curiously push the lovers into the wings, as most of the action is concentrated on the larger affairs of the pirates, the outcome of which depends the fate of the principal characters.

<sup>52</sup> The details of this narrative, like those of the speeches, preparation, and fighting in the two books that follow (five and six), are irrelevant to the story of the lovers, who are absent from both scenes.

sword, but at a word from Gobryas he resurrects himself. The trick had been affected, we learn later, by dramatic illusion, and the performance ends with Satyrion singing of the glory of Mistylos and with praise for the singer as craftsman (τεχνιτης).

Book five is entirely taken up with elaborate details of the following battle between the pirates and the Pissans. The central characters, the lovers, are not mentioned much in this book, but their fate depends on the outcome of these events over which they have no influence and of which they are scarcely aware.

A spectacular battle is fought in Book six and the pirates who are holding Rhodanthe and Dosikles are defeated. At this point, a brutally realistic account of the atrocities associated with the sack of a town is introduced. Hero and heroine are then loaded onto ships and Dosikles witnesses the ship carrying Rhodanthe sink. The heroine, however, is saved, and in due time is brought ashore in Cyprus, where the action of the final part of the romance is set.

Book seven begins with the heroine brought ashore in Cyprus, where the action of the final part of the romance is mainly set. Rhodanthe is now the slave of none other than the parents of Kratandros, the fellow-prisoner of Dosikles. While in Cyprus, she tells her story to her mistress, Myrilla. Myrilla, in turn, reveals that her son must be in captivity in Pissa along with Dosikles, a discovery that brings the two strands of the plot back together. Kratandros' father immediately sets out for Pissa to bring the young men back to Cyprus. In Book eight the action returns to Pissa, where King Bryaxes is about to execute his captives, Dosikles and Kratandros. The pair manages to dissuade the king from

his intended action, and at the crucial moment help arrives in the form of Kratandros' father. Bryaxes, in an unforeseeable twist, however, loses patience and decides to send his victims to the stake after all. This terrible fate is prevented only by a shower of rain. Reunited at the home of Kratandros' parents in Cyprus, the lovers face a final threat to their happiness in the form of Myrilla, who develops an uncontrollable passion for Dosikles and almost succeeds in poisoning Rhodanthe.

The final Book finds the lovers in a great dilemma: should they flee from Cyprus and the overbearing attentions of Myrilla at the cost of insulting their friend and host Kratandros? The problem is soon resolved by factors outside their control: the fathers of the lovers turn up unexpectedly and announce that the two families following a cryptic oracle about their offspring's whereabouts are reconciled, have traveled to Cyprus, and are to approve the match. The romance ends by briefly repeating the journeys of the protagonists, this time from Cyprus to Rhodes and finally home to Abydos.

Evidently, the Byzantine writers had no reservations uprooting and inserting into their own romances passages and events from their Hellenistic predecessors; yet in 12<sup>th</sup>-century Byzantium the Greek romances were confronting a different consciousness from the Hellenistic social environment in which it had first taken shape and meaning. MacAlister observes that some of [the] elements [of the Byzantine romances] were in harmony with its new environment (or, with allegorisation, could be made so), but others were in dissonance" (118). For instance, "in the Byzantine revival, protagonists' expressions of desire for death

feature less frequently than they do in the ancient novel, whereas there appears approximately the same number of successful self-killings among secondary characters (which, given the smaller volume of Byzantine text, actually amounts to proportionately more)” (119).

The dystopian and the sexual are confined within detailed ekphrasis that describe revelatory dreams—omens, nightmares, and hindsight—in the Byzantine romances and are no longer as violent and gruesome as they were in the early Greek novelistic romances. Byzantine writers like Eustathios Makrembolites, adopted many of the conventions of the Greek novelistic romance such as the intervention of non-human forces in human affairs, and appropriated others, such as the confinement to the element of sex, a vital part of the Byzantine genre, into the unconscious, “[he] has rendered the sex act an illusion by removing it from reality to confine it safely within a dream” (MacAlister 120).

In Book three of *HH*, the hero-narrator describes a sequence of dreams he experiences the night after Hysminias daytime advances: first, Eros, the figure in the frieze, appears and enrolls him as slave, forcibly joining his hand to Hysmine’s; at this point, Hysminias wakes up, panic-stricken, and tells Kratisthenes that he is now a slave of Aphrodite and must renounce his duties as a herald. Kratisthenes, in turn, dismisses Hysminias’ interpretations hastily and goes back to sleep, leaving the hero to indulge in fantasies of his next meeting with Hysmine, fantasizing about his own responses, reversing his and Hysmine’s daytime roles. While he lets his mind wander freely in this psychological state,

Hysminias drops off to sleep again, and experiences an erotic dream, the contents of which directly reflect the contents of his waking fantasies.

Απτομαι της χειρος, η δ' επιχειρει συναγειν ταυτην  
 και περικαλυπτειν εις το χειτωνιον, αλλ' ομως καν τουτω  
 νικω. Εφελκομαι ταυτην περι το χειλος, καταφιλω και κατα  
 δακνω πυκνα, η δ' αντεφελκεται και ολη συστελλεται.  
 Περιπτυσσομαι και τον τραχηλον και τα χειλη τοις  
 χειλεσιν επιτιθημι και φιληματων πληρω και κατασταζω  
 τον ερωτα. [. . .] Ηλγουν, ηθυμου, καινον τινα τρομον  
 ετρεμον, ημβλυνομην την οψιν, εμαλθακιζομην την ψυχην,  
 την ισχυν εχανουμην, ενωθρευομην το σωμα, επειχετο μοι  
 το ασθμα, πυκνον κατεπαλλετο μοι το περικαρδιον, και τις  
 οδυνη γλυκαζουσα κατεπεδραμε μου τα μελη και οιον  
 υπεγαργαλισε, και ολον με κατασχεν αρρητος ερωσ  
 ανεκκλαλητος, αφραστος, και τι πεπονθα, νη τον Ερωτα, οιον  
 ουδεποτε πεπονθα. Ευθυς ουν εξεπτη μου των χειρων η  
 κορη, η μαλλον ειπειν οικειοτερον εκειναι νωθρως ουτω  
 καλον απολεσας ονειρον και της εμης φιλης Υσμινης  
 αποσπασθεις. (Γ. 1 – 7).<sup>53</sup>

<sup>53</sup> “I touch her hand, but she attempts to draw it back and hide it in her dress; but, in this too, I conquer. I draw her hand to my lips, I kiss it and I nibble it, but she pulls it back again and shrinks away from me. I embrace her around her neck, I press my lips to her lips and fill them with kisses, and I let my desire pour over her. She makes a play of closing her mouth but nips me on my lip in an erotic way and steals a secret kiss. I kiss her eyes and let my soul flood with utter passion—for the eye is the source of the *eros*. I occupy myself with the girl’s breasts as well; she resists in a truly noble way and pulls away from me, using her whole body as a fortress for her bosom, like a fortress protects a city—with her hands, her neck, her chin, she defends and encloses her breasts. And she draws up her knees from below, and she casts tears from her head like missiles from a fortress, all but saying, ‘if you love me, refrain from war.’ But I feel more shame at defeat, and I hold out more forcefully, and just manage victory. But in winning I am defeated, and my aggression completely goes; for the moment my hand encircled the girl’s breast, impotence completely engulfed my heart. I felt pain, my passion slackened, I trembled with a strange trembling, my sight became dim, my spirit softened, my strength subsided, my body grew heavy, my breathing was hindered, my heart beat rapidly and a sweet pain ran right through my limbs as if it was tickling them. And an indescribable, unutterable, ineffable sensation possessed me and, by Eros, the feeling I experienced I had never felt before. So, the girl flew from my arms, or, to put it more correctly,

In Book six of the same romance, Hysminias relies on the power of dreams to save her beloved Hysmine, avoiding thus suicide, an act which would have been condemnable (by Church and State) in Byzantium, along with expressions of the protagonists' sexuality. The Byzantine secular writers spent much time, describing actions that constituted threats to Christian ideals and values. The desire for death and nonhuman intervention, for instance "would at first appear to be produced by circumstances or produce circumstances that conform to the conventions of the ancient novel, yet here again, [in the Byzantine romances] audience expectations are confronted when human fortitude is made to take precedence over despair, and active human elements to take precedence over the nonhuman or supernatural ones" (MacAlister 151). The hero, instead, uses the promises gods had made to him while in a state of deep somnolence to help deliver his beloved Hysminias from drowning.

When Hysmine is thrown into the sea as a virgin sacrifice to placate the angry Poseidon and quell the storm, the hero laments his loss calling on Eros who had betrothed him to the maiden in his dreams and begging him to use his power against the god of the sea to restore her to him. "He goes on to condemn the false promises of his dreams and recalls the earlier oath he and Hysmine had sworn to each other, promising to die together (5. 19-20, cf. 7.10 – 11): 7.17. At this, he continues with his lament until sleep overtakes him (7.17). Hysminias, then, by not proceeding with a suicide action, despite his oath and his despair at his

---

my arms fell heavy and weakly from her. And sleep straightway fled from my eyes and, Eros, I was annoyed as losing so lovely a dream and being severed from my dear Hysmine" (MacAlister 137-38).

perceived loss of Hysmine, is made to both contravene the conventions of the ancient novel and challenges the expectation of an audience familiar with the ancient genre” (MacAlister 131).<sup>54</sup>

Dreams play an equally important role furthering the narrative plot and concealing sexual desire within the bounds of the subconscious in Niketas Eugenianos’ *Drosilla and Charikles* [DC]. The three dreams experienced by Drosilla in this romance divert the immediate course of action, which includes seduction and infidelity after the couple’s separation. In Book three of *RD* the narrator with a conjectured dream alerts the hero to action that prevents the rape of Hysmine by the pirate Gobryas.

Gobryas [. . .] drew near to Rhodanthe who was lying down and said, ‘Greetings, oh wife of Gobryas, don’t be disturbed at my presence but embrace me as your bridegroom . . .’ He spoke thus and bent down towards her and proceeded to kiss her on the mouth. But the girl [. . .] ran across to Dosikles as fast as she could, and standing by him with sheer terror in her heart she said, ‘Save me, Dosikles, from this tyrant of a barbarian, save me, your beloved virgin, get me away from the power of this robber. I am ruined, hurry, truly I am done for.’ By that time sleep had barely taken hold of Dosikles, but alerted by the maiden’s shouts, it flew from him with the greatest of speed. He opened his eyes, stood up from his lowly bed, [. . .] and, fully stirred to action, addressed the girl, ‘Alas, Rhodanthe, what is terrifying you? Would you please

---

<sup>54</sup> Suzanne MacAlister argues that the revival of the Byzantine romance “might be seen as part of a contemporary upsurge of activity and renewed identification with, and nostalgia for, Byzantium’s Hellenistic heritage. The previous ideal of the *vita contemplativa* was now yielding to an ideal of the *vita activa* which was manifesting itself in new intellectual pursuit, a revival of Hellenism and a humanist questioning of issues to do with control and responsibility. This mood had started to emerge alongside the scholarly activity and revival of learning in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, exemplified particularly in the works of the scholar Psellos and his pupil Italos” (154).

tell me! Would you please tell me! Look, here I am, your Dosikles, let me know of your strife. I can assure you that you've been asleep and all you saw were just the traces of dreams that take on strange images of monsters. (Night is frequently wont to transform all sorts of visual impressions into different forms in its dreams). You have been terrified out of your wits by some physically repulsive invention. Are you frightened out of your wits by the sight of a bogey like infants are? What is this? Stop it.' As Dosikles was saying these things to the suffering girl, Gobryas [. . .] having failed in his attempt [. . .] crept away in silence to his own quarters. (143).<sup>55</sup>

In Book four, the shipwrecked protagonists find themselves in the town of Barzos in the hands of jealous and lustful masters, the advances of whom the couple avoids temporarily by convincing them that they are siblings. King Kratylos, the initial captor of the young protagonists after their shipwreck, had offered both Hysmine and Hysminias to his son Kleinias as slaves, but Charikles, a trusted companion of Hysminias discovers that the prince has fallen in love with the heroine and poses as his confidant. The prince, however, soon confesses his plans to woo Drosilla and takes her as his bride, which disappoints further the already disheartened Charikles.

Book five opens with an unexpected encounter between the two Greek lovers in a garden. Here, in the idyllic enclosure, Drosilla brings news to her beloved regarding the Queen's secret desire for Charikles and her clandestine schemes to poison her husband Kratylos. Smitten with desire for the hero,

---

<sup>55</sup> The translation is provided by Suzanne MacAlister.

Chrysilla soon confesses her love to him along with her plans to poison her husband and requests that Drosilla (as Charikles' sister) act as a go-between, which she dutifully does while lamenting her fate in the company of her beloved. The attempt of the Queen to poison Kratylos proves successful, and the protagonists despair, wishing for a miracle that will change the course of their ensuing separation. Their wishes are answered shortly: on the eighteenth day after Kratylos' death, and given the absence of a strong monarch, Chagos, the chief of Arabs, sends his envoy, Mongo, to collect tribute from Chrysilla; the Queen turns the request down and Chagos declares war against the Parthians, an event that postpones the plans of the conniving Queen. The Arabs, in turn, attack the Parthians, and in the ensuing battle Kleinias is killed in the battlefield, Chrysilla stabs herself to death, while Drosilla, Charikles, and Kleandros are taken captives by the Arabs.

In the opening of Book eight of the same romance, the reunited couple discusses the constancy of each other throughout the ordeals they experienced—opening with Drosilla's confession of her love for Charikles and a strong affirmation of her chastity—when the hero questions Drosilla of Kallidemos' intentions she assures him that her love is for him alone. Hearing this confession, Charikles asks to consummate their union but she refuses, explaining that Dionysos had assured her in a dream that the god's help would soon make their marriage possible in the presence of her parents.

The propensity of the Greek novelistic romances to project the dystopian, the violent, and the marvelous in such harmony within the narrative, has been

attributed by contemporary theorists and scholars to its “polyphonic” and “heteroglossic” qualities and in its ability to create powerful images through ekphrasis. Mikhail Bakhtin, namely, defines the Greek genre as “a consciously structured hybrid of languages” (xxix)<sup>56</sup> and attributes its success in its ability to embrace in its literary form and capture in its narrative the tendencies of a Hellenistic world still in the making, something that Epic and historiography (the prominent genres prior to the genesis of the new genre) failed to offer. He describes the Greek novelistic romances as “multilayered” and “dynamic” literature and attributes these characteristics to its fictional, paradoxographical elements that captured the needs, fears and aspirations of its Levantine reader, who was treated as *everyman*:

The world had already opened up; one’s own monolithic and closed world (the world of the epic) has been replaced by the great world of one’s own plus ‘the others.’ This choice of an alien heroism was the result of a heightened interest, characteristic for Xenophon’s time, in the Orient—in Eastern culture, ideology and sociopolitical forms. A light was expected from the East. Cultural interanimation, interaction of ideologies and languages had already begun. Also characteristic was the idealization of the oriental

---

<sup>56</sup> See Bakhtin’s, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Eds. and Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. University of Texas Press, 2001.

Bakhtin also discusses the flux literary and generic boundaries of the novel, to which he attributes the diachronic appeal and dynamism of the genre. The Greek novelistic romance “often crosses the boundary of what we strictly call fictional literature—making use first of a moral confession, then of a philosophical tract, then of manifestos that are openly political, then degenerating into the raw spirituality of a confession, a ‘cry of the soul’ that has not yet found its formal contours. These phenomena are precisely what characterize the novel as a developing genre. After all, the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction, between literature and non-literature and so forth are not laid up in heaven. Every specific situation is historical. And the growth of literature is not merely development and change within the fixed boundaries of any given definition; the boundaries themselves are constantly changing. The shift of boundaries between various strata (including literature) in a culture is an extremely slow and complex process” (33).

despot, and here one senses Xenophon's own contemporary reality with its idea (shared widely by his contemporaries) of renovating Greek political forms in a spirit close to oriental autocracy. Such an idealization of oriental autocracy is of course deeply alien to the entire spirit of Hellenic national tradition. Characteristic and even extremely typical for the time was the concept of an individual's upbringing: this was to become one of the most important and productive themes for the new European novel. (Bakhtin 29).

The success of the Greek genre, thus, is the result of its omnivorous ability to absorb and adapt stimuli from a wide range of literary forms. "The Greek novelistic romances exploit the broadest possible spectrum of intertexts, and in doing so proclaim themselves as literature within a literary tradition" (Morgan 222).

The universal appeal of both the utopian and the dystopian in the evolving Greek genre has also been attributed to the lack of specific adventure-time in the romances, which increases its appeal and affinities to other genres such as myth. No matter where one goes in the narrative of the Greek romance, with all its countries and cities, its buildings and works of art, there are absolutely no indications of historical time, no identifying traces of the era. "This, [indeed]," Bakhtin argues, "explains the fact that scholarship has yet to establish the precise chronology of Greek romances, and until quite recently scholarly opinion as to the dates of origin of individual novels has differed by as much as five or six centuries" (Bakhtin 91). Time, within the narrative of these romances is only defined in terms of premonitions, omens, and revelatory dreams, which in turn are not dependable as they adhere to the creative ploys of the writer-narrator.

The geographical, literary and cultural opportunities that the Mediterranean waterway offered to western and near-eastern peoples is best exemplified in the diverse, themes, and “polyglotic” narrative-potential of the Greek romances: “where languages and cultures interanimated each other, language became something entirely different, its very nature changed: in place of a single, unitary sealed-off Ptolemaic world of language, there appeared the open Galilean world of many languages, mutually animating each other.”<sup>57</sup> Bakhtin’s words justify and explain the Byzantine appropriation and revival of the earlier novelistic romances.

In the 12<sup>th</sup> century Byzantium the Greek novelistic romances were confronting a different consciousness from that of the particular historical and social environment which it had first given it shape and meaning—the Byzantines, after all, could only conceive and interpret the content of the early Greek romances from their own contemporary reality.<sup>58</sup> Obviously, some of the elements of the old genre were in harmony with its new environment and others weren’t; and it’s precisely here that language plays a vital role as an intertextual agent: allegory and ekphrasis aid appropriation, allegorization, and adaptation in the Byzantine romances, altering the context of the ancient romances, while

---

<sup>57</sup> *The Dialogic Imagination*—“From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse” (65).

<sup>58</sup> MacAlister affirms that the Byzantine romances were not “a case of simple mimesis. Simple mimesis takes the object of the imitation seriously, makes it its own, and assimilates it. Yet, although the resulting discourse in these new works might appear to be a self-conscious appropriation and reproduction of the ancient novel and its conventions, analysis reveals a shaping and an inversion of the original that is sometimes so subtle, that it can only be discerned through close historical and literary commentary. The writers of the genre’s revival therefore employ the alien discourse of the earlier novels and direct their own statements toward responses deriving from the specific expectations of their 12<sup>th</sup> century audience” (118 – 19).

maintaining their most captivating feature—their utopian and dystopian otherworlds.

The use of the rhetorical trope of ekphrasis in the service of narrative image-making, assists the expression of the wondrous and the dystopian in both, the Greek novelistic romances and in the Byzantine revival of the genre. Whether one perceives it as an effective descriptive means or as yet another, “ever-evolving language in a process of renewal” (as Bakhtin does), ekphrasis is the primary literary force that accounts for the descriptive dynamism (and future appropriation and adaptation) of the medieval Greek romance.<sup>59</sup>

It is precisely through ekphrastic descriptions of an increasingly alien Levantine terrain that the Greek novelistic writers gain the approval of their reading public. The fictional otherworlds of the Greek romances are microcosmic depictions of the alienation and uncertainty the individual felt in times of social change, and recovery from political turmoil, particularly at the time that the Greek romance flourished (during the first four centuries AD and later during the Komnenian and Palaiologan periods).

The dystopian otherworlds of the medieval Greek romance, thus, are in essence alien worlds (even though they are often placed within the Mediterranean) where everything in them is indefinite, unknown, and foreign. Chance, whether in the form of an abstract divine power or as an all powerful

---

<sup>59</sup> Bakhtin places ekphrasis in a wider political, historical, and social context and discusses its influence in a universal level, noting that “for all the barbarian peoples who came in contact with it, Hellenism provided a powerful and illuminating model of ‘otherlanguagedness’. This model played a fateful role in national, straightforward forms of artistic discourse. It overwhelmed almost all of the tender shoots of national epic and lyric, born in an environment muffled by a dense monoglossia; it turned the direct word of barbarian peoples—their epic and lyric world—into a discourse that was somewhat conventional, somewhat stylized” (63).

monarch—King Eros—who reigns supreme in an enchanted garden, and not the individual in these romances is responsible for the abductions, escapes, captivities, liberations, alleged deaths and resurrections in the narrative. My analysis of utopian and dystopian expression has alerted me to the literary, social, and historical potential of language. Images (an expression of language coupled with rhetoric—ekphrasis) are inseparable from narrative manifestations of various world views and from the living beings who are their agents—people who think, talk, create and act in a setting that is social and historically concrete.

## APPENDIX A

## GREEK NOVELISTIC ROMANCES: AD 100-400

*Aithiopeca or An Ethiopian Story* by Heliodoros<sup>1</sup>

The narrator, Heliodorus, begins his tale *in media res*, with a dramatic scene of mystery and excitement at the Heracleotic mouth of the Nile: a band of robbers comes upon a scene of mass slaughter that apparently happened at a banquet. Only two people are found alive: the hero, Theagenes, and Charicleia, a divinely beautiful woman (at first mistaken for a goddess) who is found nursing the badly wounded, yet superlatively handsome, Theagenes. The bandits capture the couple and take them to a village of herdsmen; there, the chief of the bandits hands Theagenes and Charicleia to the care of a young man, Knemon, an Athenian, to whom hero and heroine recount their affairs. Knemon reciprocates the friendship of the protagonists by recounting his amorous and rather turbulent misfortunes, but his story is left inconclusive, as hero and heroine go to sleep before they hear the end of Knemon's adventures.

---

<sup>1</sup> Composed in the 230s AD and organized in ten books, *Aith.* is regarded by many scholars as the apogee of the extant novels: "Pantagruel may have fallen asleep over it, but Sidney and Cervantes emulated it and Racine claimed that he knew it by heart" (Heiserman 186). Its author was the first novelist to devise a plot compounded of several lines of action and is the first to begin *in media res*. In terms of volume, it is more than twice the length of *Leucippe and Clitophon*; its length is the result of detailed descriptions of dramatic set pieces (ekphrases). Heliodoros, the author and narrator, emerges as a distinct personality in the narrative, although we know next to nothing about his life and literary endeavors. The dating of the composition has not been established with certainty. J. R. Morgan's inclination is "to date it to the fourth century on the strength of similarities between the siege of Syene [described] in the ninth book and the siege of Nisibis by the Parthians in AD 350" (Reardon 352), yet other scholars like Tomas Haag put it a hundred years earlier.

During the night, Thyamis, the robber chief, has a vivid dream in which he is back at his native Memphis; there, Isis offers Charicleia to him in an ambiguous oracle, saying that he might have the heroine and not have her, might do her wrong and slay her, but she will not die. The next day Thyamis deciphers the dream in his favor, believing that he is now entitled to take advantage of Charicleia sexually. He soon proposes to her, but the heroine swiftly makes up a story about how Theagenes is her brother and how they came to be at the scene of the slaughter; she eventually accepts his proposal in order to buy time, but another setback prevents the unwelcome union: Thyamis's camp is suddenly under attack and Charicleia is locked in a cave for safety. In spite of Thyamis's strategically cunning defense, the battle goes badly and the robber chief is now convinced that he has misinterpreted the dream. He goes to the cave with the intent to kill Charicleia, whom he holds responsible for the sinister outcome of the battle, but once there, in the dark, he kills another woman who is speaking Greek and whom he mistakes for Charicleia. Theagenes then goes off to fight and is taken captive by bandits, whom we learn, have been sent by Thyamis' evil brother, Petosiris.

In Book two, Theagenes and Knemon manage to escape and the two come across the body of the slaughtered Greek woman, which they mistake for that of Charicleia's. The hero, distraught by the extreme violence exercised on (what he perceives as) his beloved's body, attempts suicide, but is held back by the devoted Theagenes. They eventually find Charicleia and an emotional reunion ensues. Following this temporary relief, Knemon narrates his adventures, the most prominent of which involve his imprisonment by bandits and his fateful voyage to

Egypt. While in Egypt, Knemon meets with an old man who has been talking to himself by the river. The old man, who looks like an Egyptian priest in Greek garments, offers hospitality to Knemon and reveals his identity: he is Calasiris, a trusted envoy who had gone to Delphi to bring Charicleia from her adoptive father to her native Ethiopia. It is now revealed that Charicleia has in fact been born the white daughter of black royalty, but she was entrusted by a priest to a visiting Delphian, Charicles. We also learn that Charicleia is really the child of Persina, Queen of Ethiopia, who conceived her while looking at a picture of Andromeda, and thus, the heroine was born white, except for a band of black around her arm. Because of this unusual situation, Persina had to pretend the child had died at birth, since otherwise she would have been suspected of adultery. In Books three and four Calasiris continues his story with a description of the ceremonies and games at Delphi and Charicleia's love for Theagenis, whom she first met in Ethiopia, is revealed in the presence of the Ethiopian Queen.

In Book six Knemon and Calasiris find Charicleia and the three unite with Theagenes at Memphis. Here, Calasiris dies and Thyamis, who turns out to be his son, succeeds his father as high priest. The lovers' fortune proves sinister, however, once more: Theagenes and Charicleia are captured by a Persian satrap's (Oroondates) wife, Arsace, whose lust triggers a war between Ethiopians and Egyptians, develops a crush on Theagenes.

In Book seven, during the course of the war, the protagonists are captured by the Ethiopians and taken to be human sacrifices at Meroe, in Ethiopia, where

an impressive ceremony is performed (seemingly a death ceremony for Charicleia and Theagenes) during which the protagonists' virginity and Charicleia's identity are securely established. The couple is instead married and become priest and priestess of the Sun.

After the war between Ethiopians and Egyptians ends, Hydaspes, the King of the Ethiopians, heads back to Meroe in Book eight, sending letters ahead to the Gymnosophists (the naked, puritanical, black sages of the Ethiopians) and to his wife Persina telling of his success and advising them to prepare to celebrate the traditional war sacrifice. Meanwhile, Persina has had an ambiguous dream foreshadowing the return of Charicleia, and thus, when she goes to the Gymnosophists to request their attendance, they also predict, in an oracle, that the coming sacrifice will not go as planned, but that a member of the royal house will be restored. The next morning Hydaspes reaches Meroe, and after making sacrifices, he proceeds to the undertaking of the central ritual: the sacrifices to the Sun, Moon, and Dionysos, the chief gods of the Ethiopians.

In Book nine, Charicleia and Theagenes are brought forth to be sacrificed: Theagenes and four white stallions are to be killed at the altar of the Sun, Charicleia and four oxen at the altar of the Moon, but Persina feels great pity for them, especially for Charicleia. The Ethiopians, in turn, carry out a test forcing the prisoners to step on a gold gridiron which instantly burns those who have had sexual relations. Only virgins are suitable for these trials, and only married people may officiate at them. The protagonists pass the test and the Gymnosophists start to rethink the human sacrifice ritual. In the meantime,

Charicleia, in her desperation, falls at the feet of Sisimithres, leader of the Gymnosophists, and begs him to rethink the sacrifice. The heroine is overjoyed when she hears it was Sisimithres she had appealed to, for he is the one to whom Persina had given Charicleia as a baby. At this revelation, Charicleia declares she cannot be sacrificed because she is a native Ethiopian and the daughter of Hydaspes. As proof of her royal lineage, she offers the tokens that Persina had put with her long ago, among which is a band, the one that Calasiris had read in Delphi. The King and Sisimithres read the writing, and Sisimithres confesses that he was the one to whom Persina had committed the young girl. He mentions the other tokens and the heroine produces these also, but Hydaspes, is still bound by tradition and old laws to conduct the sacrifice, which he plans to do with great sorrow until the people of Ethiopia intervene convinced of the girl's royal roots.

In Book ten, Theagenes is also saved from the stake with the aid of Persina, who by now has learned Charicleia's full story and has revealed to Hydaspes that Theagenes is indeed Charicleia's husband. The public, by some miracle, understands what has been said and cry their support, which in turn leads to the reunion of the protagonists: Hydaspes and Persina crown the couple priest of the Sun and priestess of the Moon, fulfilling the oracle told long ago.

*The Alexander Romance* by Pseudo-Callisthenes<sup>2</sup>

The narrator begins with a detailed account of the pedigree of Alexander, clearing popular “misconceptions” along the way, such as that Philip was Alexander’s father. Alexander is not the son of Philip, but of the Egyptian Pharaoh and accomplished magician Nectanabus, who has been forced to flee his country and has arrived in Pella, the capital of Macedonia, in the guise of an Egyptian prophet and astrologer. While King Philip is away during a war, Queen Olympias hears of Nectanabus and summons him to cast the horoscope of the royal couple because there are rumors that upon his return, Philip will set Olympias aside for another woman. Nectanabus, who is blinded by her beauty, seeks ways to seduce her by means of magic, and finally succeeds. With the aid of hallucinatory plants that induce bizarre dreams, Olympias sees god Ammon embracing her at night and prophesying that she is to bear a male child (Ammon’s very own) who will be her avenger. The Egyptian sorcerer, shortly after Olympias’ vision, convinces her to allow him to sleep in her chamber in order to intercede with the god on her behalf, and the Queen grants him his wish.

---

<sup>2</sup> Composed nearly six hundred years after this historical Alexander died in Babylon, *AR* is antiquity’s most popular and successful novel. Its author is unknown, although in some medieval manuscripts the composition is assigned to Pseudo-Callisthenes (Alexander’s court historiographer). Its date is also uncertain, and its literary quality doubtful, yet eighty versions in twenty-four languages testify to a popularity exceeded only by the Bible. The manuscript tradition of the romance is laden with an overwhelming number of recensions, which Ken Dowen and Tomas Haag have attempted to categorize and study. Dowen claims that it is impossible to trace the author’s original composition since “we have the author’s manuscript of no ancient work of literature, only copies of copies of copies; but whereas in most other works scribes attempt to make exact and accurate copies, in the *Alexander Romance* the theme—Alexander’s life and deeds—is so dominant over the form in which it is expressed that scribes at times alter its shape: episodes can be added, subtracted, or moved, and their expression curtailed or elaborated” (Reardon 652).

Nectanabus, disguised, wearing the fleece of a ram and a pair of horns, gets into bed with the Queen the very same night, and his lust for her is quenched.

Alexander, the offspring of Nectanabus and Olympias, grows up to be a prodigious youth: bright, brave, and exceedingly handsome. At twelve, he tames the wild horse Bucephalus and kills his natural father; at fifteen he wins in the quad-riga race in the Olympic games, and avenges the murder of his official father, Philip. Upon his Olympic victory, however, the Macedonian prince returns to Pella to find his mother cast aside and Philip marrying Kleopatra, resurrecting Olympias' earlier suspicions. Philip's wedding is taking place the very same day Alexander returns and the hero joins the celebrities, unwillingly. At the wedding table, Lysias, a court joker, insults Alexander in a remark towards Philip, pointing out the hero's illegitimacy, and young Alexander reacts swiftly, hurling his goblet at Lysias and kills him instantly. Philip reacts hastily also, drawing his sword and pointing it towards his son, threatening him, but loses his balance and finds himself on the floor, and further ridiculed by Alexander.

Alexander eventually succeeds making peace with his father and decides to devote himself to military pursuits: he leads Philip's army to war against the city of Methone that has rebelled. Alexander returns victorious, once more, but upon his return he finds Darius's satraps requesting "the usual tribute" (669) from Philip, to which request Alexander responds with a most insulting refusal. The emissaries, impressed by Alexander's daring, secretly commission a miniature portrait of the Macedonian prince and take it to Darius in Babylon, reporting on everything Alexander had said to them.

Prior to the tribute incident and while Alexander was busy subjugating the Methonias, the narrator reveals the intentions of a man called Pausanias, from Pella, who falls in love with Olympias and plans to abduct her at a stage competition that Philip holds in a theater. The suitor manages to wound Philip instead, an attack which proves to be fatal, and seizes Olympias at the palace. Alexander arrives just in time, however, and kills Pausanias, fulfilling Ammon's oracle that claimed that Olympias' son would avenge the death of his father.

The hero succeeds Philip at the age of eighteen, and, accompanied with the finest of Philip's men, subjugates many Greek cities and then prepares for an ambitious expedition against the Persians. As he marches against Darius, the king of the Persians, the Greek commander crosses across Libya and reaches the shrine of Ammon, which he renovates and decorates with an inscription that links Alexander to the Egyptian god. Before departing, Alexander also receives an oracle from the god on where he might find a city named after him, which he follows, until he eventually locates it. Once in Alexandria, the hero constructs temples and shrines, and leaves behind tokens of his origin that solidify the relation of the city to the conqueror. After leaving Alexandria the Macedonian with his troops march into Memphis, where they encounter a statue of Nectanabus. After paying his respects to a shrine built in Nectanabus's honor, Alexander arrives at Tyre, and, warned by an omen, sacks the city.

The conqueror leaves Tyre and travels through Syria, where emissaries of Darius visit him offering him a letter, a strap, a ball, and a money-box of gold. Darius' boastful letter, which Alexander reads before his troops, scares the

soldiers, as it pointed out the strength and superiority of the Persian army; Alexander however succeeds in cheering up his troops with a witty, symbolic, and equally insulting interpretation of the Persian's gifts in a response to Darius.

From Syria, Alexander and his army march into Thebes, an unaccountable geographical leap. The Thebans refuse to offer men who would join Alexander's campaign and instead prepare to resist the Macedonian siege. Undeterred by Theban pleas mixed with threats, Alexander takes his revenge by massacring every Theban soldier and finally by seeing to the utter destruction of Thebes.

After the destruction of the legendary city, Alexander marches into Cilicia, where he catches an almost lethal chill after swimming in a river. He recovers, however, inspired by visions of conquest while keeping an active correspondence with Darius. Upon his recovery, the hero arrives with a large force in Persia, and intimidates the Persian troops by a cunning trick: right before battle, Alexander is warned in a dream that if he sends a messenger to Darius, the messenger will betray him, so the Macedonian arrives himself before Darius, and introduces himself as the trusted messenger the Greek commander. Before long, though, his disguise betrays him and he escapes just in time. Not long after this incident, ironically, Darius is betrayed by his very own satraps, Bessos and Ariobarzanes, and is finally assassinated. Alexander's noble-mindedness following Darius's betrayal by his own soldiers is noteworthy: in a letter to Olympias and Aristotle he states that he had the murderers of Darius crucified on the King's grave.

Shortly after the Persian King's defeat, Alexander explores unknown Persian territories and reaches places where marvelous phenomena and

anthropomorphic beasts are the norm. Having conquered Armenia and marched through Persian territory, the hero is driven by an intense desire to locate and evade Paradise. Reaching a region of shadows while trying to find the country of the Blessed, Alexander comes upon the fountain of immortality. His desire to penetrate the deepest secrets of the universe is not quenched however, and at another time, having reached what appears to him as the limits of the earth where the sky touches the earth, the Greek commander tries with an ingenious mechanic's help to rise into the air until a flying creature in the form of a man stops him and reminds him of his mortality.

In the *Letter to Aristotle about India*, Alexander inquires about the possibility of seeing some other thing "worthy of admiration and history" (707). On the advice of two Indians, he decides to consult the oracular trees of the Sun and Moon, and after an exhausting march he enters a sacred and luxuriant grove. In this idyllic location that stands at the crossroads of the Golden Age and the Garden of Eden, Alexander is confronted with his destiny: asked three times (at sunset, moonrise, and sunrise), the trees tell him only of his coming death which even his subjugation of the universe cannot spare him. He can only return to Babylon and continue to the end of the road.

The marvels of nature fascinate Alexander deeply and so do human knowledge and wisdom. India had long enjoyed a reputation of having attained the highest possible level of wisdom, and therefore, Alexander visits the Gymnosophists, the naked wise men, in search of answers to crucial philosophic questions. Gymnosophists' answers to his questions leave Alexander

unimpressed with their civilization and philosophy, and so, he marches on to conquer the realm of the Amazons and the territory of Queen Kandake, of Meroe.

The hero finally returns to Babylon. He is only thirty-two and he has been forewarned of his premature death. While in Babylon and as Alexander's death nears, several portents are reported: a woman gives birth to a child the upper part of whose body is human, but dead, whereas the lower part consists of the living heads of lions and wild dogs. The woman shows her offspring to Alexander who summons soothsayers and magicians to decipher the portent. Various interpretations are offered, the most prominent of which validates what has already been prophesied: the human half symbolizes Alexander himself who is soon to die; the animal heads are his closest followers who will survive him: they lack reason, and they are wild and hostile towards him.

Sure enough, a conspiracy against Alexander is plotted and at a banquet Alexander's cupbearer poisons him. Finally, right before he dies, the Macedonian King appoints new commanders and dictates a letter of consolation to his mother.

*Apollonius, King of Tyre*<sup>3</sup>

King Antiochus, ruler of Antioch, has a daughter who is renowned for her grace and beauty and courted by numerous men from around the world. The King, however, in a tragic twist of fate, falls in love with his own daughter and rapes her, leaving her distraught and at the verge of committing suicide, which is averted by the intervention of the girl's nurse. Antiochus continues to treat his daughter as a concubine and devises a plan to avoid all suitors from claiming her: he poses impossible riddles to suitors and the penalty for failure is death; as a result, many suitors die attempting. In due course, a wealthy and handsome Tyrian, Apollonius, is presented with the following riddle while courting the princess: "I ride on crime; I feed on a mother's flesh, I seek my brother, my mother's husband, my daughter's son. I do not find them" (738). The swift Apollonius deciphers the riddle that obviously refers to the incestuous relationship between father and daughter, but the King denies the credibility of the answer and gives Apollonius thirty days to come up with the "correct" solution, while allowing him to sail back to Tyre. Apollonius, aware of the King's cruel intentions (Antiochus has ordered his servant Thaliarchus to follow Apollonius

---

<sup>3</sup> There is no concrete evidence that can settle the question of the work's genesis. B. P. Reardon mentions the end of the second or the beginning of the third century AD as a credible time of composition, based on "general characteristics of the language and the incorporation of Symposium's riddles, which must postdate the fourth or fifth century; the earliest reference to the work occurs towards the end of the fifth century. But other indications, notable the value of gold specified [in the narrative], suggest a date some three centuries earlier—during the heyday, in fact, of the ideal romance, which apart from this example is an exclusively Greek form" (736). The anonymous author claims that he has worked from a copy of Apollonius' autobiography in his own library, the other copy being in the library at Ephesus. *AT* was perhaps first composed in Greek, but "its earlier versions," Heiserman observes, "are Latin of the Late fourth century, and it survived in Danish, Dutch, Hungarian, Old French, Old English, Spanish, and Slavic versions, through to Shakespeare's *Pericles* and Eliot's *Marina*" (213).

and kill him), sails back to his native Tyre. While in his homeland, the hero consults his books of wisdom and is assured of the accuracy of his answer to the riddle. Realizing that King Antiochus is after him, he loads a ship with gold and grain and sails off during the night, leaving behind him his fellow Tyrians deeply saddened. Thaliarchus, who learns of Apollonius' escape once in Tyre, returns to Antioch and reports the news to the King, who in turn offers a reward of one hundred talents of gold for Apollonius alive and two hundred talents for him dead.

Meanwhile, Apollonius arrives in Tarsus and meets an old man from whom he learns about the price on his head. Grateful of the old man's assistance, Apollonius offers a reward to the man whom he had first ignored, but the man simply leaves, saying that friendship is not a matter of money. Shortly afterwards, Apollonius learns from a friend, Stranguillio, that Tarsus is suffering a terrible famine and its citizens are expected to die. The hero offers the grain he has in his ships in exchange for keeping his stay secret and the citizens gladly agree to the offer, setting up a bronze statue of him to honor his rescue of the city.

Some months later, Apollonius seeks refuge in the city of Pentapolis, in Cyrene, but in his voyage a terrific storm arises and the hero manages to survive only by a miracle, clinging to a piece of timber and making it to the shore of Pentapolis. There, he begs an old fisherman for help, who in turn offers whatever little provisions he has, like the old man from Tarsus before him, including half of his cloak and sends the hero into the city. In the city, Apollonius visits a gymnasium and outdoes in skill an opponent in a ball game. The opponent turns out to be King Archistrates, whom the hero has never heard of or seen before.

Informed of the stranger's misfortunes, the King offers the stranger hospitality; in the palace, the princess, who remains anonymous throughout the novel, falls in love with Apollonius and is determined to cheer him with her musical expertise. Apollonius is disappointed at her performance, however, offers to become her music tutor, instead; the princess, distressed at Apollonius' indifference, in turn, becomes lovesick and is about to die, only to be saved in the nick of time by Apollonius's acceptance to marry her.

Six months after the wedding, Apollonius learns that Antiochus has been struck down by lightning (sent by the gods) for sleeping with his daughter and that the riches of Antioch await him and his bride. Without much delay, Apollonius and his wife, who is now six months pregnant, set out to claim their wealth. While at sea, Apollonius' wife gives birth to a daughter but the mother apparently dies in childbirth. Her body is placed in a well-crafted coffin and is sealed there along with 20,000 gold sesterces. The coffin is tossed overboard and eventually appears on a shore near Ephesus. Discovered by a doctor, the seemingly lifeless body is about to be cremated until a student of the doctor notices that the heroine is still alive. She is eventually revived and, revealing her royal origins, begs the doctor to make her a chaste priestess of Diana, which he does.

Apollonius, in the meantime, sails to Tarsus to meet Stranguillio, to whom he entrusts his daughter, Tarsia, and her nurse Lycoris. He also leaves Stranguillio much wealth and declares that he intends to become a merchant in Egypt. The identity and royal roots of Tarsia are revealed when she turns

fourteen, and from then on the girl's life is threatened: a servant is summoned to kill her, but while trying to carry out the deed the girl is miraculously abducted by pirates; the servant, ashamed of his failure, admits to have killed her and tossed the body to sea. The woman responsible for the plot is Dionysias, Stranguillio's wife, who carries out her plans in secrecy. To justify Tarsia's strange disappearance, Dionysias and Stranguillio build a tomb for her and tell the people of Tarsus that she died suddenly of stomach trouble.

Tarsia is in turn taken to Mytilene and is sold in the slave market. There, she is purchased—in a competitive auction—by a pimp, who advertises her virginity and puts it up for sale. The young slave skillfully convinces her customers of her royal roots by recounting her adventures and she even manages to make money of them while still remaining chaste.

In the midst of this, Apollonius returns to Tarsus to inquire after his daughter, and, once informed of her seeming death, he becomes severely depressed and sails off, having ordered his crew to confine him bellow deck. A terrible storm forces the crew to stop at Mytilene, however, and there the crew spends the night in town, where a festival of Neptune is in progress. While in town, the sailors hear of the rare qualities of Tarsia and summon her to help them bring their captain out of his depression. Tarsia, unsuccessful at first to even get Apollonius to listen to her, offers numerous riddles to him, the correct solutions to which would rid him of her presence. Apollonius solves all of them and she subsequently starts offering the story of her origins and adventures to him, which leads to a mutual recognition and reunion of father and daughter.

A few days later, Tarsia marries Athenagora, the man who had initially advised her to sell her adventurous story as a means of securing her virginity and making money. The couple and Apollonius sail away toward Tyre, but in a dream the hero sees an angel who advises him to stop at Ephesus and along with his daughter and her husband to enter the temple of Diana and recount their adventures. Apollonius follows the advice and in the temple he is reunited with his wife, whom he had long perceived as dead. They all eventually return to Tarsus where Stranguillio and Dionysias's wrong-doings are revealed and the conniving couple is put to death. Finally, Apollonius meets the old fisherman who had offered him hospitality and rewards him richly, as he also rewards Hellenicus, the old man who had informed him of the conspiracy of Antiochus. Apollonius also has a son, who becomes king of Pentapolis, while Apollonius rules over Antioch and Tyre.

*Chaereas and Callirhoe* by Chariton<sup>4</sup>

The writer professes to recount a love story (“παθος ερωτικον εν Συρακουσιας γενομενον διηγησομαι”) that took place in Syracuse. The heroine, the beautiful Callirhoe, is the daughter of the famous Syracusan general Hermocrates and is surrounded by numerous suitors—princes and tyrants—from all Sicily and beyond. Eros intervenes promptly and saves the heroine from the unwelcome suitors by arranging a meeting between Chaereas and Callirhoe: on her way to worship Aphrodite, Callirhoe comes face to face with handsome Chaereas, son of Hermocrates’s bitter rival, Ariston, and although the encounter is brief, the couple is consumed by great passion.

In spite of Eros’ assistance both protagonists experience great difficulty admitting their feelings: Callirhoe is ashamed to tell her family of her love, and Chaereas, when he reveals his feelings for the heroine to his parents, meets strong opposition, as he is told that he must woo the daughter of another family. Heartbroken and lovesick, the hero attracts the attention of all Syracusans who are afraid that the young man will perish unless they act to save him. The citizens of Syracuse in a public assembly implore Hermocrates to save Chaereas by

---

<sup>4</sup> *CC* is probably the earliest extant work of Greek prose fiction. Reardon places the composition of this Greek novelistic romance as early as the middle of the first century AD, noting that, “the geographical and social background of one of the story’s main locations, the region of Miletus, certainly seems to fit that area of Asia Minor in the Early Roman Empire” (17-18). The author, a certain Chariton of Aphrodisia, a small city in the province of Caria, in southwestern Asia Minor, claims to have written a story of “ερωτικα παθηματα,” amorous sufferings. As far as the manuscript tradition of *CC* is concerned, only one manuscript survives. It was composed in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century and, according to Reardon, is unreliable: “In modern times Chariton, with Xenophon, had to wait until the eighteenth century to become known, no doubt largely because of the slender earlier tradition; the first edition of *Chaereas and Callirhoe* appeared in 1750” (19). Fragments from three papyri written between AD 150 and 250 and from a 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century palimpsest indicate, however, that the text remained popular until late antiquity.

consenting to the marriage. Hermocrates, under public pressure, yields to the request, and a spectacular wedding follows. The happiness of the newlyweds is soon threatened by Callirhoe's suitors, however, who, offended and furious at being brushed aside, conspire to break up the marriage. Chaereas is deceived into thinking that the heroine is unfaithful and, in his rage, kicks his wife in the stomach. Callirhoe falls apparently dead and shortly afterwards the truth about the conspiracy is revealed. In his great despair, Chaereas attempts suicide but is restrained from doing so the last minute. The heroine in turn is offered a magnificent funeral and is placed in a semi-subterranean tomb with extreme wealth.

The public nature and extravagance of Callirhoe's funeral attract the attention of thieves, however, who break into the vault at night to rob the treasure. Astonished at finding Callirhoe alive, instead, the captain of the robbers, Theron, decides to carry off the heroine along with the spoils and sell her as a slave. Here the narrator in a backward leap into the narrative informs us that Callirhoe had been in a deep coma, from which she recovered as the robber entered.

The robbers carry the spoils and the heroine to Miletus, in Asia Minor, which at that time it was part of the Persian Empire. There, Callirhoe is offered to Leonas, the steward of a noble servant of Dionysius, the Greek officer of the region. Theron and his men leave the city right after the "transaction" so they will not attract attention. Dionysius, we are informed, has recently lost his wife and is inconsolable; thus upon seeing the beautiful Callirhoe for the first time, he mistakes her for Aphrodite and is bewitched by her beauty. Dionysius seems

honorable though, since instead of taking advantage of the heroine he asks her to recount her story, which she does, or at least parts of it—she reveals the incident of the comma and how she has come into his possession. Dionysius cannot find the courage to send her back to Sicily and instead tries to win her trust in hopes of marrying her, although Callirhoe admits that she still has feelings for Chaereas and hopes to reunite with him.

Shortly after she recounts her hardships, Callirhoe discovers that she is two months pregnant by Chaereas and faces a great dilemma: she will either have to keep her child and raise it in slavery, or have an abortion. Plangon, a young female slave of Dionysius's, intervenes just in time and convinces Callirhoe that her master will never allow her to raise her child unless she gets him to marry her and pass the child as his. Callirhoe is at first indecisive, but with the help of a vision of her husband in which Chaereas advises her to take good care of their son, agrees to the marriage.

Back in Syracuse, meanwhile, ships have been sent out in search of the robbers and Callirhoe; Chaereas, although still devastated, participates in the search himself. By good luck, he comes across the shipwrecked ship of the robbers and discovers that all of the robbers have drowned with the exception of Theron. With the aid of fortune, the robber Theron is captured and right before being crucified, he conveniently reveals that the heroine is somewhere in Miletus.

Chaereas and his entrusted men, Polycharmus being his most faithful friend, sail off in search of Callirhoe again. Back in Miletus, however, Phocas, the husband of Plangon and Dionysius's steward, learns of the recovery mission

and asks the Persian military to destroy Chaereas' ship as a hostile vessel. The mission is unsuccessful however and Chaereas is taken prisoner and sold as slave to Mithridates, a Persian satrap of Karia, a region near Miletus. Dionysius, in turn, hearing Callirhoe cry out Chaereas's name in her sleep, learns that she has been married to him, but he is not suspecting anything, even though Callirhoe's child is born seven months since the marriage.

When rumors start to spread in Miletus about the attack of the ship from Syracuse, Callirhoe concludes that Chaereas must be dead, and Dionysius seizes the opportunity to convince the heroine of the sure death of her husband by staging a public funeral for him. The funeral is attended by Mithridates, Chaereas' master, who falls passionately in love with Callirhoe. The plot thickens further when Chaereas is about to be crucified and his identity is revealed to Mithridates, who in turn advises him to try to win his wife back. It is revealed however that Mithridates secretly hopes to win Callirhoe ultimately for himself, so when Chaereas sends a letter to Callirhoe, it is taken to Dionysius instead, and this leads to a quarrel between Dionysius and Mithridates. The dispute eventually reaches the ears of the Persian King and the two men stand trial. In a sinister twist of fate, Callirhoe and Chaereas are also brought to attend the trial, but they don't yet meet.

While on trial, Mithridates and Dionysius accuse each other of stealing another man's wife and the tension escalates as Mithridates is bombarded with accusations; finally, when Dionysius challenges his rival to exonerate himself by presenting Chaereas, Mithridates does precisely that. Hero and heroine stand

before each other for the first time since Callirhoe fell seemingly dead. Yet, despite the protagonists' reunion, the story does not end here. As the differences of Dionysius and Mithridates are about to be resolved, the King of Persia himself falls desperately in love with the beautiful heroine. Unable to come up with a solution to the trial and his own confused emotional state, the King postpones the trial. Fortune intervenes once more and resolves the problems with a sudden rebellion from Egypt against the Persian rule. The Persian King wages war against the Egyptians taking Callirhoe with him and Dionysius, determined to distinguish himself in battle and prove worthy of Callirhoe's attentions, follows the King and his retinue. Chaereas, in the meantime, who has already been dissuaded from suicide three times already by Polycharmus, joins the rebel side in desperation, determined to achieve at least a glorious death, bringing glory to the Greeks and shame to the Persian King. Chaereas also joins the battle and distinguishes himself as a brilliant commander—even though the Egyptian army is defeated, he succeeds in defeating the Persians. The Egyptian King is defeated and eventually kills himself.

Following the Egyptian defeat, Chaereas with his fleet surrounds the island of Arados and captures several prisoners, among who is the Persian Queen and his beloved Callirhoe (although it is only in the nick of time that he learns of her presence). The heroine is offered to the commander of the fleet in marriage but she refuses, threatening to kill herself; shortly afterwards, hero and heroine meet and their reunion is followed by the resolution of all pending plot conflicts.

Callirhoe settles her own affairs—with Dionysius, the King, and Queen—tactfully, but curiously, she leaves her child with Dionysius. There also follows a triumphal return of hero and heroine to Syracuse where the heroine finally offers her thanks to Aphrodite for returning with her husband and blames destiny for her misfortunes. From that point on, Chariton hints, the couple will live happily ever after, “and that,” the author concludes, “is my story about Callirhoe” (124).

*Daphnis and Chloe* by Longus<sup>5</sup>

Unlike the other novelistic romances, the action of this pastoral novel does not range over half the Mediterranean, but is rather confined to the East coast of the island of Lesbos.<sup>6</sup> *Daph.* opens with a motif also used in *Leucippe and Clitophon*, one which is similarly found in the beginning of the novel: in the prologue of the four books that follow, Longus tells how when he was hunting in Lesbos he came upon a beautiful grove sacred to the Nymphs, which had in it a painting adorned with a love story whose details foreshadow the elements of the story of Daphnis and Chloe. Inspired by the painting, the narrator decides to

---

<sup>5</sup> Almost nothing is known about the author of *Daph.* with the exception that he was a native of Lesbos, the island of the composition. The dating of *Daph.*'s composition is not precise and is based on narrative inferences. "What is completely clear" Reardon argues, "is that [the writer] is [one] of considerable sophistication; and his work is often placed in the period of the Second Sophistic, a renaissance of Greek prose writing in the second century AD. Certainly, Longus's book is as artistically conceived and skillfully written as any of the Greek novels we now possess" (285). The manuscript tradition of *Daphnis and Chloe* is particularly fascinating—"the first edition of the Greek text was that of Raffaello Colomabni, published in Florence in 1598; but it was not until 1810 that a French artillery officer called Paul Louis Courier was able to publish a complete text, without the lacuna in Book I. On a visit to Florence in 1807 he had a manuscript which seemed to contain the missing passage, but he then had to go back to the army. Returning in 1809, he confirmed his first impression, made a careful copy of the passage, and left a piece of paper in the manuscript to mark the place. According to him, he did not notice that the paper was wet with ink. It stuck to the manuscript, and was with great difficulty detached two days later, leaving the vital passage almost illegible. He was accused, not unreasonably, of having done it on purpose, to ensure that all future editors would have to rely on the copy that he had made. Whatever the truth, [ . . . ] the text proved immensely popular: Giles Barber has identified sixty editions of it which appeared in the nineteenth century, and seventy more in the twentieth" (Turner 11).

<sup>6</sup> What most obviously distinguishes *Daph.* from the rest of the Greek novelistic romances, is its pastoral character. In the manuscripts the title commonly begins with the word *ποιμενικα*, meaning "a pastoral story," and the book ends with the word *ποιμενων παιγνια*, "games of shepherds." Paul Turner traces Longus's inspiration for the creation of *Daph.* to the Alexandrian poet Theocritus (c. 300-c. 260 BC). In Theocritus' *Idyll*, Turner claims, "Longus found not only the name Daphnis (there referring to a legendary cowherd who pined away and died for love) but also a hint to turn his own Daphnis into a goatherd who would try to copy his goats' mating procedure (III. 14). The Daphnis legend supplied other elements in the novel's plot, notably the exposure of the two children, their pastoral upbringing, and the hero's gift for song. Theocritus's teacher, the Alexandrian love-poet Philitas or Philetas of Cos, was probably the original of 'old Philetas' (II. 3), and Theocritus himself was doubtless the 'Sicilian goatherd' acknowledged as a source for the tale of Syrinx, the Pan-pipe (II. 33). He was actually the chief source of the wholenovel, in which at least eighty passages were inspired by the *Idylls*" (9).

recreate the picture in words which he does in the narrative that follows and offers his work to the Nymphs and Pan.

Lamon, a goatherd from Lesbos, finds a boy (who bears tokens of noble birth) being suckled by one of his goats and carries the child home to his wife Myrtale; the two decide to raise the boy and name him Daphnis. Two years later, a shepherd named Dryas finds a baby girl in a beautiful cave sacred to the nymphs, being suckled by one of his ewes. The baby girl also carries tokens of noble birth, and Dryas, just like Lamon before him, takes the child home to his wife Nape and the two decide to raise it and name it Chloe.

Thirteen years later, in the same night, the two guardians dream of cupid (whom they don't recognize as the god of love) who commands that Daphnis become a goatherd and Chloe a shepherdess. Dryas and Lamon offer the young protagonists to the Nymphs and send them out to the fields with the flocks. Eros soon intervenes and plants his seeds of desire in the unsuspected Chloe who is too naïve to even understand what has been happening to her. Her ignorance is made explicit in the following episode: Daphnis accidentally falls into a pit, and Chloe swiftly fetches a cowherd (Dorcon), who helps rescue him. As Chloe helps Daphnis wash up in the Nymph's spring, the hero seems beautiful to her and she desires to see him bathing again. She gradually becomes sick with love for Daphnis, but has no understanding of it. In the meantime, the cowherd Dorcon being older and knowing about love, falls in love with Chloe and starts wooing her with gifts. One day, Dorcon and Daphnis enter into a beauty contest with

Chloe as judge and with a kiss from Chloe as prize. Naturally, Daphnis wins Chloe's kiss which in turn infects him with love.

Dorcon, fearful of the emotions and attentions the young protagonists express toward each other, asks Dryas for Chloe's hand in marriage promising many gifts, but is refused. Frustrated and devastated by Dryas' rejection, Dorcon devises a plan to force himself upon Chloe, and disguised in a wolf-skin, he waits in ambush but the dogs catch his scent and attack the "wolf." Daphnis and Chloe call off the dogs, however, and naively help Dorcon wash his wounds.

The seasons change, and in the summer, when everything is at its ripest, Daphnis and Chloe are burning with desire for one another. In the autumn, a mysterious adventure occurs that tests the love and devotion of Daphnis and Chloe: pirates from Tyre raid the countryside, carrying off food, cattle, and Daphnis to their ship. Chloe discovers the goats scattered and runs to Dorcon for help, but he has been cut to pieces by the pirates. Dying, Dorcon tells her what happened, suggests how she might rescue Daphnis, avenge Dorcon, and punish the pirates. He gives her to play his pipe that controls his herd and asks for a final kiss, which he promptly receives; Chloe indeed plays the pipe to the cows, which jump off the boat, capsizing it, and the pirates drown while Daphnis swims to safety. After Dorcon's funeral, Daphnis and Chloe observe each other bathing again, and dedicate Dorcon's pipe to the Nymphs.

In Book two the young protagonists receive instruction on the power of love from an old man, Philetas, who claims to have encountered Eros in his own garden, where the winked god confessed to him that Daphnis and Chloe were

destined to fall in love. Philetas tells them of the power of Love, and of his own love for Amaryllis. To cure their pain, Daphnis and Chloe try kissing and embracing, as Philetas advised, but this does not prove an effective antidote to their suffering.

The peaceful encounter with Philetas is soon interrupted, however, by a violent abduction: a group of rich young men from Methymna holds Daphnis responsible for the destruction that his and Chloe's herds caused on their ships and want to take the hero away. Philetas, acting as arbitrator, acquits Daphnis, who argues that the blame should be placed on the wind, the sea, and the young men's hunting dogs that chased the goats down to the shore. Unsatisfied, the Methymnians try to take Daphnis by force, but the villagers drive them off. The young Methinians, however, upon their return to Methymna, falsely claim that the Mytileneans forcefully confiscated their ship and persuade their fellow citizens to secretly send out ten "war-ships." The ships arrive and the men raid the coast of Mytilene, taking much plunder, including Chloe and her goats. Sleeping in the Nymph's sanctuary, Daphnis has a mysterious dream, but the three Nymphs assure Daphnis that they are looking after Chloe, having enlisted Pan to rescue her and the flocks.

During the evening, night, and following day, the Methymnians experience strange sights and sounds: invisible forces seem to attack, and the sound of a Panpipe throws them into panic. At mid-day, the general Bryaxis is warned by Pan in a dream: the god tells him that they have acted impiously by filling the countryside with fighting, by stealing animals, and by dragging from an

altar a girl dedicated to Eros, and the god threatens to sink the ship unless the heroine and her flocks are returned. Alarmed by the dream, Bryaxis allows Chloe and her goats to return, led by the mysterious sound of a Panpipe. Daphnis and Chloe reunite in due course and the two spend more time together, kissing, embracing, and swearing their love to each other.

Book three begins with the Mytileneans' revenge: in response to the Methymnians' attack, the Mytileneans send 3000 infantry and 500 cavalry under the command of Hippasos against Methymna, but the Methymnians who have since learned the truth about the arrogant young men, pay compensation to avoid war.

When winter comes heavy snows confine everyone at home, and Daphnis, in order to see Chloe, goes out to catch birds. He hesitates, however, to knock on Dryas' door because he can think of no good reason for his visit. By chance, however, Dryas goes outside, sees Daphnis, invites him in for dinner, and then for the night. The hero sleeps with Dryas, and Chloe with Nape. The same night Daphnis dreams that he is sleeping with Chloe, but it is not until Spring that the two will get the chance to admit their love for one another. To assuage the erotic suffering, Daphnis tries to lay with Chloe but is unsuccessful, as he doesn't understand what he should do, leaving Chloe and himself even more confused and frustrated. At this point the narrator provides a swift resolution to the young protagonists suffering by introducing two new characters. Chromis, an old neighbor, we learn, has a young and pretty wife, Lycaenion, who comes from a nearby town and decides to seduce Daphnis offering him gifts. After spying on

Daphnis and Chloe, Lycaenion tells the hero that the Nymphs ordered her in a dream to educate him in making love and Daphnis gladly cooperates; afterwards, however, when Lycaenion warns the hero that doing this with Chloe will hurt Chloe, Daphnis decides to refrain from future attempts.

Summer comes around rather quickly and many suitors come for Chloe. Nape is eager to have her married, and Daphnis decides to join the number of her suitors, although Lamon is opposed. Myrtale explains to Daphnis that they do not have any money to offer as a marriage-gift and suggests that he ask for her, certain that his poor offer will be rejected. Daphnis, in despair, appeals to the Nymphs for help and they appear to him in a dream, revealing to him where to find a treasure of 3000 drachmas, washed up on the shore next to a rotting dolphin from the Methymnians' ship. She tells him to give it to Dryas and promises that some day he will be very rich. As prophesied, Daphnis finds the money, and finally proposes to Chloe, asking her beloved and her father not to tell anyone about the money, especially Lamon. They happily accept and try to persuade Lamon to accept the marriage. Dryas even offers to give Chloe a dowry, but Lamon claims that as a slave he must ask the consent of his master, who will be in the country in the autumn. Lamon hints at Daphnis's high birth, which makes Dryas wonder if Daphnis was himself a foundling and had rich tokens like Chloe, and assures the hero that he will keep Chloe for him until autumn.

The final Book four begins with an ekphrastic description of autumn, as Lamon prepares his garden for his master's visit. His garden has beautiful trees and flowers, a view of the plain and sea, and a shrine and altar of Dionysus. Inside

the temple are paintings on subjects connected with Dionysus. One of Chloe's suitors, Lampis, in an effort to set Daphnis' master against him, destroys the flowers in the garden, disrupting the idyllic landscape and the protagonists' hopes. Eudromus, a messenger, returns with news that his master will arrive in three days, and the master's son the following day. Astylus arrives with company, Gnathon, and takes pity on Lamon, promising to tell his father that the horses had caused the damage. Daphnis brings him presents, yet Gnathon, interested only in food, drink, and sex, decides to seduce Daphnis and unsuccessfully tries to rape him. Undeterred, however, Gnathon hopes to talk his friend Astylus into giving Daphnis to him as a present.

Dionysophanes, the owner of the estate and Astylus's father, arrives with his wife Cleariste and after inspecting the farm, promises Lamon his freedom. The wealthy couple also inspects the goats, which Daphnis has increased. This inflames Gnathon even more, who begs Astylus to help him with Daphnis. Astylus promises to ask his father to take Daphnis back to the city, but Eudromus overhears this conversation and informs the hero and Lamon, who decide in turn to reveal Daphnis' origins. Astylus asks his father and receives his consent, but when the master announces what is to happen to Daphnis, Lamon reveals the truth about Daphnis' nobility and Gnathon's depravity.

After examining the tokens, Dionysophanes and Cleariste realize that Daphnis is their own son, whom they once had entrusted to a servant, Sophrone, to give away. Astylus, delighted by the news, rushes out to find Daphnis and greets him as his brother, and Daphnis, in turn, embraces his birth family,

forgetting about Chloe in the excitement. Dionysophanes explains why they had exposed Daphnis and is happy to have him again, especially since his two oldest children have since died. They sacrifice to Zeus while Gnathon seeks refuge in the temple of Dionysus.

The following day people come to congratulate the family, including Dryas and Daphnis dedicates his pastoral possessions to the country gods while awaiting the right time to confess his love for Chloe. Meanwhile, Lampis with the aid of others kidnaps Chloe, who has been complaining that Daphnis has forgotten her, thinking her beloved will no longer want her and that Dryas will not be satisfied with a cowherd. Gnathon overhears Daphnis lamenting the heroine's fate in the garden, gathers together some of Astylus' men, rescues Chloe, and takes her to Daphnis, who forgives Gnathon and apologizes to Chloe for neglecting her.

The next day Dryas tells Dionysophanes about Chloe's origins and urges him to find her family in case she turns out to be a suitable wife for Daphnis, and Dionysophanes declares that the two will be married and that Chloe will soon find her family. The heroine dedicates her pastoral possessions to the gods, and after offering the expected sacrifices, Dionysophanes returns to Mytilene with Daphnis and Chloe to prepare the wedding and seek her parents. Dionysophanes, in the meantime, has a dream in which the Nymphs beg Eros to consent to the marriage. Eros commands him to invite the leading citizens to a feast and show them her tokens. In accordance with his dream, Dionysophanes arranges the banquet, at which, an old man by the name Megacles recognizes the tokens of his daughter

and explains why he had exposed Chloe. Now that he has become old and wealthy he longs for his daughter, but the gods seem to mock him by sending him dreams like the one claiming that he would become a father by an ewe.

Dionysophanes explains how the dream of the old man has been fulfilled, introduces Chloe, and asks that she be given to Daphnis in marriage.

The following day, they all set out for the country, since Daphnis and Chloe do not want to live or be married in town. Megacles and Rhode meet Dryas and Nape and give them more money. All the villagers are invited and the wedding is performed in front of the Nymphs' cave in a pastoral setting. Daphnis and Chloe plan to spend most of their life in pastoral pursuits, giving their baby boy to a she-goat to be nursed, and their baby girl to a ewe, calling him Philopoimen and her Agalaia. They plan to adorn the Nymph's cave, consecrate an altar to Love the Shepherd, and dedicate a temple to Pan the Warrior.

*An Ephesian Tale* by Xenophon of Ephesus<sup>7</sup>

Book one begins with the introduction of the protagonists and an account of their lineage: Lycomedes and Themisto, well-respected and influential citizens of Ephesus, have a son, Habrocomes, who grows up to be exceptionally handsome and accomplished. Arrogance, however, the youth's flaw, becomes a never-ending source of adventures and tribulations: at sixteen, admired like a god for his beauty, Habrocomes rejects Eros, claiming to have more appeal than the god himself. The winked god devises a cunning plan and takes revenge starting with the introduction of heroine at a festival of Artemis. Anthia, who leads the festival, is perfect match for the arrogant Habrocomes, as she is just as accomplished and of almost divine beauty. The two fall in love instantly, and the hero, realizing his shortcomings, begs Eros for forgiveness, but the god is determined to have his vengeance.

The young lovers soon fall into a deep depression and start wasting away. Fearing of the worst, their families consult the oracle of Apollo at Colophon that is interpreted in favor of the young couple—the young protagonists are married, and after a passionate night, they are sent off away from Ephesus in accordance to

---

<sup>7</sup> The authorship of *ET* is as ambiguous as the identity its author, Xenophon with the by-name Ephesius (of Ephesus); ambiguity surrounds the composition of the work as well: Reardon notes that, “of its author we know next to nothing; a notice in the *Suda* tells us only that he also wrote a history of Ephesus and that the *Ephesian Tale* is in ten books, rather than the five we now have. His very name may be a pen name, borrowed from a more famous Xenophon. Niklas Holzberg, claims that the text of *ET* as we know it from one surviving manuscript is an abridged version: “Xenophon’s Ephesian origins, cited otherwise only in the Byzantine encyclopedia, the *Suda*, are similarly hard to believe, because the details he gives about the place betray none of the special knowledge a local would have. The *Suda* maintains that the novelist also wrote a book entitled ‘On the City of the Ephesians’ and other works, but here too it would seem advisable to treat the entry with skepticism” (52). Of the work’s date, we know even less: suggested *termini* are inconclusive, and the most likely guess is the second century AD” (125). The language of the author is in general primitive and the syntax idiomatic.

the oracle. The couple first stops at Samos and then at Rhodes, the citizens of which believe that both Habrocomes and Anthia are divine. The protagonists set sail again, but the wind becomes slack and the sailors begin to drink; while on board, Habrocomes has a dream that suggests an impending disaster from which only Anthia and he will escape. It is soon revealed that they have been followed from Rhodes by Phoenician pirates, under the leadership of a certain Corymbus. The pirates take the couple prisoners aboard and burn Habrocomes' ship along with the crew. They eventually come to shore at their hideout near Tyre, which is commanded by the pirate leader Apsyrtus. By this time, Corymbus has fallen in love with Habrocomes, and he enlists the help of a fellow pirate, Euxinus, who has in turn fallen in love with Anthia. Both pirates mix promises with threats in order to convince the protagonists to separate and the couple does not reject the proposals, but only asks for time to think matters over.

Book two opens with the hero and heroine vowing to commit suicide rather than giving in to the amorous attentions of their captors; their predicament, however, is not to last long, however: chief Apsyrtus arrives and takes Habrocomes and Anthia as his share of the booty, saving them from their "suitors," and transports them to his native Tyre to work as slaves in his estate. There, Apsyrtus' daughter, Manto, falls in love with Habrocomes and pursues him mercilessly. Habrocomes rejects her proposal and is thrown to a dungeon, as a result, falsely accused by the gilded Manto of raping her. In the meantime, Manto marries a man by the name of Moeris and the two sail off to Syria, taking Anthia

as a slave with them. Once in Syria, Anthia is given by Manto to Lampon, a goatherd, to be his wife, but Lampon respects Anthia's virtue and does not attempt to consummate their union. To complicate the events further, Moeris falls in love with Anthia and Manto orders Lampon to kill her; he instead sells her to Cilician merchants, the vessel of whom is shipwrecked. Due to fate's intervention, Anthia is saved from drowning by members of the robber band of Hippothoos; at this point, Habrocomes learns that Anthia has been sold, leaves the house of Apsyrtus, meets Lampon, and then sails off to Cilicia.

Meanwhile, while among Hippothoos' bandits, Anthia is almost sacrificed to Ares, only to be rescued in the nick of time by Perilaus, a peace-officer of Tarsus. Perilaus, unfortunately, falls in love with Anthia, and pressures to marry her, but the heroine at least succeeds put the wedding off for thirty days. In the meantime, Habrocomes meets Hippothoos, who has survived the destruction of his first robber band, and the two develop up a semi-loving friendship, agreeing to help each other, yet secretly hopes in their travels to learn something of Anthia.

Book three begins with Hippothoos' story of his earlier love, Hyperanthes, which is followed by Habrocomes' story of Anthia. Hippothoos, recognizing parts of Habrocomes' narrative, remembers Anthia and promises to help Habrocomes find her. Anthias' wedding day approaches, meanwhile, and she convinces a local doctor to give her a drug in order to commit suicide. The doctor's remedy however is merely a sleeping potion and she is entombed alive. When she awakes Anthia is saved by grave robbers, who take her to Alexandria and sell her to slave dealers, who in turn sell her to an Indian by the name of

Psammis. After numerous inquiries, Habrocomes and Hippothoos learn of Anthias' grave-looting and Habrocomes, abandoning his friend Hippothoos vows to find his beloved's body alone. On his way to Alexandria, a destination that he picks for no specific reason, his ship is wrecked and Habrocomes is captured by herdsmen who sell him as a slave. The hero is bought by an old, retired soldier called Araxus who treats him like a son, but his wife, Kyno, who is very ugly, falls in love with Habrocomes. The hero almost gives in to her, but when Kyno kills her husband to secure the young hero, Habrocomes refuses her and she takes her revenge by accusing him of the murder. Consequently, Habrocomes is arrested and taken to Alexandria. Meanwhile, the Indian Psammis who had bought Anthia in Alexandria would have raped her, except that she cleverly tells him she is consecrated to Isis for a year.

Book four begins with Hippothoos' search for Habrocomes that leads him to Egypt. The narrator reveals that Habrocomes is ordered crucified, to which the hero submits happily believing that Anthia too is dead. A number of strange miracles however occur that prevent the hero's death: through a chance wind, Habrocomes is swept from the cross into a torrent and survives; he is then captured again and, facing execution, he is again rescued by chance. Meanwhile, Psammis, who has Anthia, is ready to sail off for India: he first stops at Memphis, where Anthia prays to Isis and asks for her help. While in the vicinity of Coptus, they are attacked by Hippothoos' band that kills Psammis and captures Anthia. Hippothoos does not recognize Anthia at first who tells him she is an Egyptian called Memphitis.

Book five takes place in Syracuse, where Habrocomes arrives after a terrible storm. There, he joins an old fisherman, Aigialeus, who treats Habrocomes as his son and tells him his life-story. Meanwhile, Hippothoos' band has become large and the leader decides to move north to attack larger targets. In the meantime, Anthia attracts many other suitors (many of whom are violent), but she manages to escape and receives a strange message while praying at the temple of Apis. After praying to the god, she hears a chorus of children in front of the temple singing, that she will soon regain her husband. Before long, however, the heroine is sold to a brothel-keeper in Tarentum. There, she is forced to exhibit herself in a house of prostitution, but she manages to remain untouched by feigning an attack of epilepsy.

Hippothoos, meanwhile, has arrived at Tauromenium in Sicily, while Habrocomes decides to sail to Italy to look for Anthia. At Tarentum, Anthia dreams she is with Habrocomes again, but some beautiful woman takes him away from her. She awakes and, believing that Habrocomes has betrayed her, she wishes to kill herself. Before attempting suicide, however, she is sold to Hippothoos, who has come to Italy in search of his friend Habrocomes. Hippothoos, unaware of Anthia's true identity, falls in love with her and just when he is on the point of using force, Anthia reveals her real identity to him. He, in turn, reveals his relationship with Habrocomes and takes care of Anthia, promising to restore her to her beloved. In the meantime, Habrocomes has gone back to Rhodes where he reunites with Leucon and Rhode and mourns the still missing Anthia.

By this time, Hippothoos has decided to sail to Ephesus with Anthia, and en route stops at Rhodes, where a great festival for Helios is taking place. When Anthia and Hippothoos enter the temple they see the dedications, but still do not know that Habrocomes, Leucon, and Rhode are in Rhodes. The couple finally reunites at the temple and shares their stories with their beloved friends.

Hippothoos also joins them in Ephesus, “where their life together [is] one long festival” (169).

*Leucippe and Clitophon* by Achilles Tatius<sup>8</sup>

The novel begins with information about Sidon, where the first narrator finds himself after barely escaping from a violent storm. After making an offering to goddess Astarte, he goes sightseeing, and comes upon a picture of Zeus abducting Europa, which is described in a detailed ekphrasis.

Clitophon, the hero who also narrates the story, is a rich young Tyrian. His father, Hippias, has planned for Clitophon to marry Kalligone, his nineteen-year old half-sister, yet fate has different plans for the young hero which are foreshadowed to him in a dream: Clitophon and his prospective bride, whose bodies are grown together, are separated by a woman holding a sickle who looks like a fury. Soon after this warning, Clitophon falls in love with his cousin, Leucippe, who moves to Tyre to live with her extended family due to war-threat from Thrace toward her native Byzantium.

In Book two Clitophon courts Leucippe in a garden and begins his wooing

---

<sup>8</sup> *LC* consists of eight books which were probably written in the last quarter of the second century AD. Numerous subplots not mentioned in this basic summary of the novel are thoroughly discussed and analyzed by Easterling and Knox in *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*. Both authors comment upon the “peculiar intertextual influences” found in each of the eight books: “Achilles’s treatment is rarely direct and vigorous. The florid, Asiatic style, intent on conceits and short sentences, combines with rich elaboration of plot and incident to produce a baroque *tour de force*, which sometimes cloy. Structurally it falls into pairs of books each presenting a different stage of the lovers’ fortunes while progress is retarded by sub-plots, descriptions of the works of man or nature, and philosophic speeches and reflections. The first pair lingers over the growth of the couple’s love. [. . .] Although by the end of this book they are embarked for Egypt, Clitophon is not in bed with Leucippe but debating the merits of boys and women with friends old and new, Clinias and Menelaus. The second pair of books exploits separation and danger, and adumbrates in the general Charmides the rival motif that will dominate Books 5 and 6. Their location allows digressions on the geography and beasts of the Nile, evocative of Herodotus. Within Books 5 and 6 the couples Clitophon—Melite and Thersander—Leucippe are contrasted: Book 5 culminates in the former’s union, 6 in Leucippe’s impassionate assertion of her virginity. The implausibility of this claim prepares the way for the trial of Clitophon and ordeal of Leucippe that are expanded to fill most of Book 7 and 8” (693). Nothing certain is known about the writer. Byzantine scholars like Arthur Heiserman claim that the author was probably an Alexandrian who had written treatises on etymology.

by giving the house-slave Satyros (with Leucippe in earshot, of course) a lecture about the power of love among birds (peacock), minerals (magnetite), plants (the palm), waters (the Alpheios loves Aretousa), and even between different species (the viper and the eel).

The young lovers' affair soon flourishes, but is soon interrupted abruptly by the girl's mother, who, sleeping in a chamber adjacent to that of the heroine, discovers the clandestine affair, forewarned by a dream of a robber ripping open her daughters' abdomen with a sword. Hero and heroine decide to elope to avoid public humiliation and separation, yet they instead find themselves shipwrecked at Pelousion, in Egypt, and captured by brigands. Clitophon, by Fortune's intervention, escapes, only to witness an apparent sacrifice of his beloved and is about to kill himself when it is revealed (to him and to the reader) that she has survived by a trick.

Once reunited, the heroine objects to lovemaking, and Clitophon becomes ever wearier, especially after the dangerous courting of the general Charmides. Before Leucippe has a chance to defend her honor, she collapses and enters a death-like state. She soon recovers, however, and both protagonists visit Alexandria and Pharos, where new adventures ensue. In Alexandria, Leucippe is kidnapped by bandits, the dreaded Boukoloï that inhabit the Nile Delta, and Clitophon again thinks he sees her die. Helpless, the hero is forced to watch the bandits take a young woman whom he erroneously identifies as Leucippe, tie her to a tree, disembowel her, and eat her cooked remains.

In Book four Clitophon, believing his beloved dead and carrying with him what he thinks are the heroine's remains, returns to Egypt, where he is talked into marrying a young widow, Melite. He, however, keeps the affair chaste, since he has vowed to never have sex in the region where Leucippe died. Instead, Clitophon and Melite travel to the young widow's native Ephesus, where, surprisingly, Leucippe turns out to be living as Melite's slave; what's more, the widow's seemingly dead husband turns out to be alive and pursues Leucippe unsuccessfully. Clitophon, while watching Leucippe being courted by Melite's husband, succumbs to Melite, but once only, as the author emphatically points out.

In Book six several attempts are made on Leucippe's virtue, first by Sosthenes, Thersandros' steward, and then by Thersandros himself which turn unsuccessful. The book ends abruptly with Leucippe and Clitophon held captive, the first in a hut, the latter in prison, both awaiting trial.

Thersandros devises a plot and successfully convinces Clitophon that Leucippe has been murdered in Book seven. The hero, devastated by yet another separation from his beloved, wishes to die and so, when brought to trial for adultery, he makes a false confession implicating himself to Leucippe's murder. The heroine, in the meantime, escapes from the hut and seeks asylum in a temple dedicated to Artemis; around the same time, her father, Sostratos, who has been searching for her motivated by a dream, arrives in Ephesus. A trial and ordeal help establish Leucippe's virginity in Book eight, and all parties depart from

Ephesos. The couple and Sostratos finally return to Byzantium, where a formal wedding ceremony marks the ending of their trials.

*A True Story* by Lucian<sup>9</sup>

The narrator begins his work with a “literary” warning: all books contain lies, especially serious books and most especially philosophy. His book, however, is exonerated since the author admits from the beginning that it does not contain a word of truth, neither does it contain evidence for any of the claims that he makes.

The narrator with a crew of fifty men sails out one day from the Pillars of Hercules into the “western ocean” in an attempt to discover the limits of the open sea. Eighty days into their voyage, narrator and crew reach an island in the heart of which sprout vines with anthropomorphic characteristics that manage to seduce the men with kisses and arouse their passions with their sensuality. Lucian decides to sail off to escape the seduction of the vines only to find his vessel suspended forty miles in midair, after a terrible storm that whirls the ship around. There, they discover an ethereal island (we later find out it is in fact the Moon) ruled by King Endymion. Lucian and the crew soon find themselves involved in a war expedition that Endymion, King of the Moon-dwellers, leads against Phaethon, ruler of the Sun-dwellers. The narrator, in detailed ekphrases that resemble Homeric descriptions, narrates in great detail the armies of both sides as they are preparing to launch into a mid-air battle, involving cloud-centaurs, horse-vultures, horse-ants, and acorn-dogs. After a spectacular fight, the two parties

---

<sup>9</sup> Lucian was a Syrian by birth but Greek by culture. He wrote *TS* parodying the strange tales told and written by Greeks from the *Odyssey* onwards. Lucian himself admits in the prologue of his tale that his narrative contains allusions to “various poets, historians, and philosophers of former times who have

work out a compromise in order to avoid the building of a wall that would separate the Sun from the Moon, and the terms of the peace are listed. While on the moon, the men observe bizarre sexual practices that they record without passing criticism on their morality or lack of it thereof. The “island” is populated only by men who give birth to an offspring, having bore it in the calf of their leg. When growing old and helpless, Moon-dwellers do not die, but rather dissolve into the air like dust. Their eyes, it is revealed, are removable and they all have large cabbages growing like tails over their buttocks. Hair is considered repulsive, and garments are particularly unusual: we learn that the clothing of the rich is of soft glass, and that of the poor of woven brass.

Shortly after the end of the battle between Moon and Sun-dwellers, Lucian and his crew reach Lamptown, a place populated by talking lamps that live in fear of being put out; their next stop is Cloud-Cuckooland that reminds them of Aristophanes’ description of such a place in his comedy *Birds*.

The crew is now back in the open sea, overjoyed by the calmness and lack of immediate danger. Before long, however, a greater disaster occurs: the men find themselves swallowed up by a monstrous whale, in the belly of which they meet an elderly man from Cyprus with his young son, also trapped inside the beast like Lucian. The men spend two years in the belly of the whale, during which time they explore a thickly wooded area. At the end of the second year the crew grows tired in captivity and decides to set the wood aflame in order to get the beast to open its mouth so they can escape in the open ocean. Their plan is

---

concocted long, fantastic yarns—writers I should mention by name did I not think their identities would be obvious to you as you read” (Reardon 621).

successful and the narrator with his men spend their first few free days in the open on a white island, which we later learn is the island of milk, governed by the divinely beautiful Nereid Galatea.<sup>10</sup>

Their next stop is the Island of the Blest, which is described in a lengthy ekphrasis. “This city is made of gold throughout and has a wall of emerald around it. There are seven gates, each a single piece of cinnamon wood [. . .] there are baths also—great glass buildings with cinnamon burning inside, with warm dew instead of water in the actual troughs” (637). On this island, the famous dead inhabitants—Ajax, Homer, Odysseus, Socrates, Aesop, Diogenes, and many others—engage in interesting discussions with Lucian and the crew and, like the Moon-dwellers, have no inhibitions about their sexual practices.

After having spent seven months conversing with famous and notorious classical figures on the Island of the Blest, Lucian sails off again, bearing a letter from Odysseus to Calypso. On their way to Ogygia, however, the men stop at a small island, the Island of Dreams, as they refer to it, on which Sleep rules, having under his power two satraps: Nightmare, the son of Pointless, and Richman, the son of Daydream. Winked dreams, monster dreams, sweet dreams, and all kinds of visions inhabit the isle that Lucian, all of which the men enjoy immensely.

---

<sup>10</sup> Lucian’s reference to Aphrodite’s cult-image bears significant similarities with Ovid’s story of transformation, “Pygmalion and Galatea.” In book ten of *Metamorphosis* (lines 243 ff.), Ovid narrates the story of Pygmalion, son of Belus, who fell in love with Aphrodite. Because the goddess would not have intercourse with him, he made an ivory image of her and laid it in his bed, praying to her for pity. Entering into this image, Aphrodite brought it to life as Galatea, who bore him Paphus and Metharme. Paphus, Pygmalion’s successor, was the father of Cinyras, who founded the Cyprian city of Paphos and built the famous temple to Aphrodite there.

The next stop of the narrator is Ogygia, where Lucian delivers Odysseus' letter to Calypso and learns of Odysseus' regret of ever leaving her island, accompanied with a promise of returning to her once he devises his escape from the Isle of the Blest. The men accept Calypsos' generous hospitality and rest on the island for a few days before sailing off again for unknown lands.

After departing from Ogygia, Lucian and his men ride a storm for two days at the end of which they are attacked by Pumpkin-pirates and their ship is subsequently capsized by a monstrous halcyon bird. The men find themselves swimming in the open sea and observe a truly miraculous occurrence: "the goose that formed our figurehead suddenly, flapped its wings and cackled; our navigator Scintharus, who was bald, grew hair and, oddest of all, the ship's mast began to sprout, putting forth shoots and, at the top, fruit—figs and black grapes, not yet ripe" (646). The men eventually manage to save themselves and their ship and lift it high enough, over the trees that separate them from the open sea, "sailing through the wood" (647), and encounter a new island, inhabited by savage Ox-heads, the ruler of which is a fearsome Minotaur.

The narrator concludes his adventures with one last stop on the island of Witchcraft, which is inhabited only by beautiful women, all wearing garments that trail around their ankles. Shortly after the description of the enchanted isle, we are told that the women are not women, or female, but creatures called Donkey-legs, as they have hooves instead of feet. Lucian ends his narrative rather abruptly, promising to relate the rest of his adventures of the "other" continent in

“the books that follow” (648). Lucian, of course, never wrote them, and this is perhaps the biggest lie of all.

*The Wonders Beyond Thule* by Antonius Diogenes<sup>11</sup>

## Photius's Summary (Bibliotheca 166)

Photius, the narrator of the original (and now lost) twenty-four books that constitute Antonius Diogenes' *WT*, begins with a commentary on the narrative and stylistic form of Diogenes' composition, declaring it "uncluttered and so pure that there is no lack of clarity even in its digressions" (777). Photius' praise of the narrative continues addressing the subject matter itself: the mythical and the incredible are staple characteristics of the narrative, yet they appear as altogether credible, "in the contrivance and elaboration of its episodes" (777).

The story opens with the introduction of two travelers—Dinias and his son, Demochares—who leave their homeland "in search of information" (777). Crossing the Black Sea and then the Caspian, they wander in Scythian territory with an intention of traveling East. While in Scythia, they are joined by three other men: Carmanes, Meniscus and Azoulis. All men sail away and they soon

---

<sup>11</sup> The contents of the twenty-four books of Antonius Diogenes' *The Wonders Beyond Thule* or *Τὰ Ὑπερ Θουλην Ἀπιστά*, have survived only in a poor summary provided by the ninth-century patriarch of Constantinople, Photius. Photius ran a reading circle, the members of which read various works of literature which they summarized for the benefit of the others. These summaries and commentaries were eventually recorded by Photius for his absent brother. The dating of the original composition has not been established with certainty, although most Byzantine and Classical scholars tend to place the work in the first century and a half AD. Gerald Sandy, the translator of *WT* in Reardon's *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, offers useful information regarding the dating of the composition, revealing that "some time close to the middle of the third century A.D. the Neo-Platonist Porhyry cites (Antonius) Diogenes and his work by name in his biography of Pythagoras, thereby providing one of the only two pieces of evidence for the time of composition of the romance. Antonius Diogenes' pretense that Alexander the Great played a part in transmitting the documents that served as the basis of the work provides the other chronological indicator, as it points to a date later than the last third of the fourth century B.C. The Latin name Antonius suggests an imperial date, however; and if, as has been argued, Lucian's *True Story* parodies Antonius Diogenes' work, then a date of composition in the first century and a half A.D. is most likely" (775).

reach the island of Thule, where Dinias takes as a mistress Decryllis, a Tyrian by birth who now belongs in the aristocracy of Thule.<sup>12</sup> Dinias soon learns of the wondrous travels of both Decryllis and her brother Mantinias that resulted from the greed of an evil Egyptian priest by the name of Paapis. The priest initially befriended the family, appearing as a true benefactor, only to take advantage of it and force Decryllis and her brother in exile, away from their native Tyre. Brother and sister managed to escape to the island of Rhodes, and from there they wandered to Crete and later among the Tyrrhenians and the people of the Cimmerians. Decryllis, quite boldly, claims not only to have seen Hades, but also to have “learned much about it, making use of her personal maidservant Myrto as her informant; Myrto had died long ago and returned from the dead to instruct her mistress” (778).

The narrator ends abruptly Decryllis’ account of her adventures and places Dinias instead as the main character narrating Decryllis’ travels to an Arcadian named Cymbas, who has been sent to Tyre as a messenger of the Arcadian League to convince Dinias to return to his homeland. What Decryllis had initially confided in Dinias is now retold by him in the autumn of his life. Within Decryllis’ story, however, there is another story, “which she in her turn had heard from a man whom she met on her journey; and this man, in his turn, recounts what he has heard from somebody else. Later on, Decryllis’ brother tells her yet more stories of a fantastic kind to pass on to Deinias” (Haag 119).

In one country, Decryllis meets people who can see well at night, yet are

---

<sup>12</sup> The name Thule probably refers to Iceland.

completely blind in the daytime and finds matriarchy practiced widely as women work the fields while men tend to the needs of the household. We also learn that Paapis, the Egyptian priest, employs magic and transforms people, including Decryllis and her brother, by spitting in their faces so that they appear dead during the day and revived at night.

The twenty-fourth book of the long lost original (according to Photius' summary) presents Azoulis as the narrator and then Dinias, adding Azoulis's stories to the tales he had already told Cymbas. Azoulis tells how he managed to break the spells Paapis had placed on Decryllis and her family "when he found the secret of the punishment inflicted, and also the antidote to it" (780). While Decryllis and Mathinias hurry home to save their parents from the spell with Azoulis's assistance, Dinias, Carmanes, and Meniscus extend their journey "beyond Thule," where they witness several marvels: they arrive in Arctic regions, "where the night may last a month, six months, or even a whole year, and the day is of the same length. At last he gets so far north that he reaches the moon, but at this stage Photius' patience runs out: he simply refuses to report what fabulous things Antonius Diogenes has to tell of his visit" (Haag 120).

We then learn that during his sleep and with the aid of the Sibyl, Dinias is miraculously transferred in Tyre, in the temple of Hercules where he meets with Decryllis and Mantinias. The three are now safe, having also released the parents of Decryllis and Mantinias' from the charms of Paapis.

Dinias is determined to record all of these marvelous stories and asks Cymbas's companion, Erasinides, who is a skillful writer, to write them down in

cypress tablets. Dinias' accounts are indeed written down in two copies: one is to be taken to his native country where people are eager to share in his knowledge, and the other will be placed in his grave, secured in a box. Finally, we learn from Photius that this latter copy, the one Diogenes seems to rely on, was discovered by Alexander the Great himself when he conquers Tyre! "On the box was written 'Stranger, whoever you are, open this box to learn what will amaze you.' On opening the box, Alexander and his companions found the cypress tablets that, it seems, Decryllis had buried at Dinias' orders" (782).

## APPENDIX B

12<sup>th</sup> CENTURY BYZANTINE ROMANCES: 1081-1185*Aristandros and Kallithea* by Konstantinos Manasses<sup>1</sup>

The romance of Aristandros and Kallithea survives only in fragments, the contents of which are organized into nine inconclusive books; the narrative of these fragments is in turn based on mere compilations of “moral precepts put together between the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> century, [that] represent the least interesting passages,” according to Beaton, which make a coherent and orderly reconstruction of the narrative events almost impossible.<sup>2</sup>

The background of the romance is the Levant—there are rudimentary references throughout the narrative of the romance to Tyre (II 72), Argos (II 93), and Rhodes (II 94), yet these cities and island are not related to specific adventures the protagonists undergo. The story begins *in media res*, following the tradition of Heliodoros, and initiates the trials of the superlative beautiful protagonists, Aristandros and Kallithea, who are separated and taken hostages by “barbarian” bandits. While in bondage, the protagonists lament their fate and

---

<sup>1</sup> Konstantinos Manasses, a 12<sup>th</sup> century Constantinopolitan, was a prolific poet and chronographer of the Byzantine court. His writing flourished under the protection of the *sebatokratorissa* Irene Komnene and Manuel I, whose patronage was secure enough to generate financial support for Manasses’ writing. The action of the romance is typical of most 12<sup>th</sup> century Byzantine romances, involving the sinister fate of separated lovers—the faith and constancy of the divinely beautiful protagonists are tested in a series the trials and adventures that unravel around the Mediterranean, until, at the end, the two reunite (due to divine intervention), love prevails, and a joyful marriage ensues.

<sup>2</sup> See Beaton’s reference to the manuscript tradition of the romance in *The Medieval Greek Romance*, 79.

seek relief in the sharing of their misfortunes with other captives, also in the same predicament. The wailing of the lovers is soon interrupted, however, by the introduction of an ambiguous traitor whose schemes and wrong-doings are eventually punished by an abrupt and violent death—the narrator concludes that nothing escapes the eye of an omnipotent and omniscient God (I. β. 15).

Following this narrative intrusion, the heroine offers some encouragement to her beloved, reminding him that difficult times are always followed by rewarding experiences, and advises him to be strong and patient with the hardships that are to follow, reminding him that their trials have just begun. At this point, the narrative is interrupted and in the following fragment there is mention of an unspecified tyrant who has been abusing a town, subjecting its citizens to his greedy and unrealistic quests, and a description of a wedding banquet from which the father of the groom is missing. Assumingly, this is the wedding of Aristandros and Kallithea, which inaugurates the beginnings of their trials.<sup>3</sup>

In the second section of the poem we receive fragmented clues regarding the social implications of the union of the lovers in matrimony. In II, 96-102, it is revealed that Charidemos, Kallithea's father, did not, at least prior to the couple's wedding, favor Aristandros and was disappointed by his daughter's decision to marry the hero. The narrator's references to Charidemos' personality are not very flattering—he is referred to as “*δολοτροπον*” (deceitful) in II 100 and as

---

<sup>3</sup> Eudoxios Tsolakes believes that the wedding banquet accounts for a missing logical beginning to the story of the lovers that must have occurred prior to their abduction at the beginning of the romance, a reasonable explanation for the narrative leap.

“ὠμον καὶ θρασύκαρδιον” (blunt and of rude temperament or heartless) in II. 98.

Following their imprisonment, the couple falls successively into the hands of at least three tyrannical masters and both hero and heroine are subjected to unwelcome attentions and trials of their constancy (it is not made clear how the couple escapes imprisonment or how it came to be subjected to other masters). In the course of these trials, we learn that Aristandros narrowly escapes death while in the hands of barbarian robbers on at least one occasion: II, (63-106), and that both protagonists are transported by brigands, who have captured them with plans to sell them as slaves, to Egypt; the pair is finally set free in the course of a battle between barbarian forces in Egypt and shortly afterwards board a ship for their native Greece.

A new character is introduced in lines I. ζ. 31–39, who interrupts the trials of the protagonists and complicates even further the narrative flow—a woman falls in love with Aristandros and incites jealousy on the part of the heroine. It is possible, as both Rhode and Tsolakes have indicated, that this threatening female figure refers to the lover of a male character (possibly a friend of Aristandros’) or to a jilted concubine whose love for Aristandros was unrequited.

Nothing more specific can be deducted about the nature of the protagonists’ trials or the means of their transportation from place to place. There is even a rather abrupt change in the course of the plot, since the trials of the

protagonists are cut short by rejoicing (I. θ. 32–36 and I. θ. 23–29), joined by groups of people who celebrate the resolution of the couple's turbulent adventures and trials.

*Digenes Akrites*

The setting of this romance is the frontier between the Christian empire of Byzantium, or “Romania,” as it is called in the text, and the Islamic world of eastern Anatolia and Mesopotamia.<sup>4</sup>

The exploits of the Byzantine borderer survive in six manuscripts, the oldest surviving of which is the Grottaferrata, or GRO MS.<sup>5</sup> I have chosen to use the GRO MS in my study of the poem because its narrative is clear, simple, and concise; it also includes important episodes that the other MS versions omit, making it thus particularly reliable as reference. The GRO MS overall is complete, except for a gap, as Denison Hull has pointed out, in the sixth book,

---

<sup>4</sup> The historical world of the poem is a composite of conditions that existed at different periods between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries. Roderick Beaton in *The Medieval Greek Romance* believes that the medieval poem was probably composed within a few years of 1100. John Mavrogoradato, who is in agreement with Beaton’s approximate dating of the work, believes that the language of the poem alone does not offer reliable evidence of its composition: “the language is fairly correct literary Greek, of probably the eleventh century, with a noticeably large number of words from the Septuagint. It would be difficult, however, judging by language alone, to say more than that the Grottaferrata was written between the tenth and the fourteenth centuries” (xvi).

Denison Hull, in his introductory note on the Grottaferrata MS, provides details on the specific geographic location of the work, which lay in Asia Minor, around the Tarsus Mountains and the Euphrates River. “The Roman Empire at that time although legally the same empire as that founded by Augustus nearly a thousand years earlier, consisted only of the southern tip of Italy, the eastern shore of Sicily, the Balkan peninsula, and about two-thirds of Asia Minor. It was Roman in the name and tradition only, for its capital was Constantinople, its language Greek, and its religion Orthodox Christianity” (xvi).

<sup>5</sup> The manuscript appears to have been written in the 14<sup>th</sup> century and, “although it can hardly be a transcript from the poet’s dictation, it is probably very close to it. It was discovered in the Greek rite monastery of Grottaferrata near Frascati, Italy, in 1879, and was published in Paris by E. Legrand in 1892” (Hull xxvi).

where a page has been torn out.<sup>6</sup>

The structure of the narrative falls into two parts, each of which forms a coherent whole by itself. The first part tells the story of Digenes' parents, that of the Arab emir who marries a Byzantine noblewoman and converts to Christianity, and that of their son, Basil Digenes Akrites. The narrative starts with the exploits of Digenes' father, a Syrian emir, who makes a spectacular raid into Byzantine Anatolia, capturing towns, killing the men, and taking the women prisoners. Among the prisoners is the daughter of a general. The devastated mother of the girl writes to her sons begging them to rescue their sister from dishonor, and the three brothers, fearing their mother's curse, grant her the wish. The youngest brother rides up to the Arab encampment and challenges the emir to a single combat; a ferocious fight follows at the end of which the Arab promises to return the girl (in order to save himself, also), but the brothers are deceived. Directed to where they can find their sister, the brothers come upon the mutilated remains of a large number of Christian girls, killed because they refused the sexual advances of the Arab soldiers. After this horrific interlude and in an unexpected reversal of faith, the emir admits to the brothers that he has kept their sister safe in his tent,

---

<sup>6</sup> The page that was torn out has received particular attention by critics who have suggested that the page with the only amorous scene in the poem was torn by someone who was apparently scandalized by the details of Digenes' adulterous love. As far as the surviving manuscripts of *DA* are concerned, five are metrical versions, one is written in prose, and one is written in Russian. John Mavrogordato provides a thorough account of the surviving manuscripts in the introduction of his edition of the poem (xv – xxix). The single prose version of the Byzantine romance survives in Paschales, MS 1632, and is divided in ten books. The Russian version is recorded in Speransky MSS sec. XVIII and in Kuzmina, MS 1761. The five metrical versions that follow are listed in chronological order they have been categorized by Mavrogordato:

Trepizond	MS sec. XVI	3,182 lines	10 books
Andros	MS sec. XVI	4,778 lines	10 books
Grottaferrata	MS sec. XIV	3,749 lines	8 books
Escorial	MS sec. XVI	1,867 lines	8 books
Oxford	MS 1670	3,094 lines	8 books

has respected her chastity, and, along with his followers, wishes to convert to Christianity and take Christian brides.

The tale of Digenes himself is told with some gaps and inconsistencies, following the tale of his father. While still young, Digenes' exceptional heroic ability and prowess are highlighted in the hero's first hunt at the age of twelve; his success in hunting leads soon to his graduating to bigger game: the abduction of a wife. The hero is obviously imitating his father by following the "family tradition" of carrying off the daughter of a Greek general. After an extravagant wedding, the hero leaves his parental castle and with his bride, the lovely Eudokia Doukaina, and a few personal attendants lives a nomadic life among the lonely places of the border as an independent lord.<sup>7</sup> He exterminates the bands of robbers and cattle drivers who haunt the border (all of whom seem to be Greek--*Απελατες*)<sup>8</sup>, and one of whom is a woman, the Amazon Maximou.<sup>9</sup> After the defeat of Maximou, the hero, quite abruptly, decides to abandon his duties as a borderer and settles for a more tranquil life, building an impressive palace with a

---

<sup>7</sup> The Akrites, or soldier, stationed on the Turko-Byzantine border, "was an element of the late Roman army whose role persisted as late as the 11<sup>th</sup> century, by which time he had evolved into a frontier commander with a fortress and an army. The application by GRO of the term to an Arab warrior (GRO. 1. 155) suggests that the need for responsible officers was felt on both sides of the border" (Jeffreys xxxvii).

<sup>8</sup> Between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries the "*Απελατης*" was a bandit, or a member of a military team with special duties. Jeffreys notes that, "the guerillas encountered by Digenes seem to have hunting, especially for women, as their chief occupation with a vestigial suggestion of a more formal military role. [. . .] Both frontiersman and guerilla, play what seems to be time-hallowed roles in the life of the Byzantine frontier communities, in a symbolic existence with the Arabs" (xxxiii).

<sup>9</sup> The action of the poem tends to be very inconsistent. For example, we are informed that Digenes had subjugated the Arabs and brought peace to Roman lands, whereas nothing of the kind has been mentioned before. In a story that is otherwise lacking in supernatural elements it is surprising to be suddenly faced with a serpent that has assumed human form and then sprouts three heads. Also, the warlike Maximo, descended from the Amazons whom Alexander the Great had brought from the land of the Brahmans, is a strange figure in a world that is peopled by real men and women. The hero's infidelities, also, though excused at some length, are poorly integrated into the plot.

garden, described in an ekphrases, by the river Euphrates. Here, not long afterward, he dies, apparently young, of natural causes.<sup>10</sup> Right before he dies, however, the hero calls his companions and reminds them of all his heroic deeds. At the end of his speech, he seems to discern an angel of fire in the sky, and stricken with fear, Digenes calls his wife, to whom he announces his imminent death. Eudokia Doukaina expresses her desire to die with him, and the poem ends with the two dying together.

---

<sup>10</sup> Many parallels between Digenes' early and unusual death and the circumstances surrounding the life of Alexander the Great have been made by Mavrogordato and Elizabeth Jeffreys: a parentage that spreads across national boundaries, precocious childhood, horse taming (GRO 4. 1054ff), and of premature death after bathing (GRO 8. 30ff). Roderick Beaton also notes that the GRO MS "tells us that the fatal ailment [of Digenes] arose from bathing, and is a precise description of the symptoms echoes a rare technical usage common to Arrian's historical account and Pseudo-Kallisthenes' legendary one of Alexander's death after bathing in the river Tarsos. The hero's youth and childlessness are also emphasized in this version" (46).

*Drosilla and Charikles* by Niketas Eugenianos<sup>11</sup>

Amid rapine, slaughter, and destruction, Drosilla and Charikles are first presented to us as captive in a plain that embraces a beautiful, enclosed meadow sacred to Dionysos in which the heroine is attending a festival. Hero and heroine end up as slaves in the Parthian court, both becoming (simultaneously) the object of an intrigue in their captors' households. Following their capture, Charikles is put in a prison and Drosilla is taken to the women's quarters of Queen Chrysilla, the wife of the Parthian king, Kratylos. While lamenting his sinister fate and the loss of his beloved, Charikles is approached by a fellow prisoner by the name of Kleandros, who comforts him and offers a sympathetic ear to his woes; Drosilla, in the meantime, spends her time in the service of the queen, lamenting the loss of her beloved Charikles.

Book two opens with the lament of Charikles on the second day of his imprisonment. Kleandros, awoken by Charikles' mourning, attempts to console his friend by recounting his love story for the maiden Kalligone, who had been kept secluded in a chamber, removed from the sight of men, on the island of Lesbos: after catching a glimpse of the girl, Kleandros fell in love and attempted

---

<sup>11</sup> There is so far no evidence to suggest a precise date for the composition of *DC*. Niketas Eugenianos' active literary role seems to have been wide-ranging; as a result, scholars can only account for an approximate time of composition based on a chronological and comparative study of contemporary Byzantine writers who are thought to have influenced Eugenianos. "If the death of Prodrornos is correctly dated to 1156 – 8," Beaton notes, "this would confirm Kazhdan's dating of the romance to shortly after 1157; however, it is not clear what consequences follow if Prodrornos lived, as Kazhdan now believes, into the 1170s" (77). Scholars cannot account with certainty, however, for the life of Eugenianos, which was difficult (according to the author's very rhetorical statements), until he was rescued by Stephen Komnenos, whose teacher Eugenianos claimed to have been. *DC* is organized in nine books, each with a strong thematic unity.

to win her by a series of letters. The intense correspondence eventually led to a visit of Kleandros to the maiden's sleeping quarters, where he serenaded her with his "kithara" and received reassurance of the girl's modest affections.

In Book three Kleandros continues his narrative of the wooing of his besieged beloved, expressing how favorably Kalligone had replied to his serenade: she greeted him as her bridegroom, claiming that Eros had joined them *in marriage in a vivid dream that she had the night before Kleandros' visit*. After this revelation, Kleandros and Kalligone eloped and boarded a ship, unsure of its destination. Sinister luck and ill wind, however, forced them to the town Barzos at the same time as the Parthians had launched their attack. Luckily, Kalligone managed to escape the barbarians, unlike Kleandros, who was captured and taken prisoner in the present location where the two men met just a day ago. Charikles reciprocates with his own story of meeting and falling in love with Drosilla, which started at a festival of Dionysos in his hometown of Phthia. The couple, following the steps of former lovers, also eloped and boarded a ship, sailing under the auspices of Dionysos, who had declared himself (in a dream to the hero) an escort to the bride.

Charikles continues his story in Book four, telling how their ship was captured by pirates and how the heroine and he managed to flee ashore and hide themselves from the slaughter. On the following day, the couple reached the town of Barzos which was at the time celebrating a festival, and this information regarding the protagonists whereabouts prior to their capture offers a logical explanation of their presence in Barzos, absent in the introduction of the romance,

which opens *in media res*. The Book concludes with the mutual decision of the protagonists to introduce themselves as siblings to their masters in order to avoid possible separation and harsh outbursts of jealousy from either of their captors. The narrator also reveals that King Kratylos has offered the protagonists to his son Kleinias as servants. Charikles soon discovers that the prince has fallen in love with the heroine and poses as his confidant, but the prince soon confesses his plans to woo Drosilla and take her as his bride, which disappoints further the already disheartened Charikles.

Book five opens with an unexpected encounter between the two Greek lovers in a garden. In the idyllic enclosure Drosilla brings news to her beloved regarding the Queen's secret desire for Charikles and her clandestine schemes to poison her husband Kratylos. Smitten with desire for the hero, Chrysilla soon confesses her love to him along with her plans to poison her husband. She also requests that Drosilla (as Charikles' sister) act as a go-between, which she dutifully does while lamenting her fate in the company of her beloved. The attempt of the Queen to poison Kratylos proves successful, and the protagonists despair, wishing for a miracle that will change the course of their ensuing separation. Their wishes are answered shortly: on the eighteenth day after Kratylos' death, and given the absence of a strong monarch, Chagos, the chief of Arabs, sends his envoy, Mongo, to collect tribute from Chrysilla; the Queen turns the request down and Chagos declares war against the Parthians, an event that postpones the plans of the conniving Queen. The Arabs, in turn, attack the Parthians, and in the ensuing battle Kleinias is killed in the battlefield, Chrysilla

stabs herself to death, while Drosilla, Charikles, and Kleandros are taken captives by the Arabs.

In Book six the lovers and Kleandros are carried off by the victorious Chagos to his homeland, in an unspecified country. During the trip (which is by land), Drosilla is struck by the branch of a tree and falls from her carriage while traveling along a mountaintop. The heroine soon meets an elderly woman by the name of Maryllis who offers her shelter, food, and helps her seek her beloved. The hero, in the meantime, learning of Drosilla's fall, laments his fate once more, reveals his love for her in the presence of Chagos, and wishes to die. Upon hearing Kleandros' tale of love for the heroine, Chagos in turn releases both the hero and Kleandros and the two young men make their way to a nearby village in which Drosilla has also been guided by a dream. The heroine enters the village's inn and asks the innkeeper's son, Kallidemos, if a young man by the name of her beloved had stopped to spend the night. Kallidemos, struck by desire for her, conceals the presence of Kleandros and Charikles who have been sleeping in a room upstairs, causing the heroine to despair and lament her fate. In the meantime, Charikles is reassured in a dream of his beloved's safety and presence in an unspecified location not far from the inn.

In Book seven the two young men guided by the details of the ominous dream, set off in quest of the heroine. They soon come across the elderly woman, Maryllis, whose hospitality Drosilla had accepted after her fall and explain their predicament; the woman bears the news of her meeting to Drosilla and a joyful reunion follows. Kleandos, in the meantime, is informed about the reunion and

plans to abduct Drosilla, but his plans are suspended by a burning fever that confines him to bed. The Book ends with a celebration of the couple's reunion and the sharing of their adventures in the company of friends.

Book eight opens with Drosilla's confession of her love for Charikles and a strong affirmation of her chastity—when the hero questions Drosilla of Kallidemos' intentions she assures him that her love is for him alone. Hearing this confession, Charikles asks to consummate their union but she refuses, explaining that in a dream Dionysos had assured her that the god's help would soon make their marriage possible in the presence of her parents. The couple's confessions are interrupted by news brought by Gnathos, a merchant coming from Barzos. The merchant reveals the death of Kalligone, Kleandros' beloved from whom he had been separated shortly after their arrival in Barzos and the devastating news causes the bereft Kleandros to die of grief, shortly afterward. Following the tragic news of Kalligone's death, the merchant also bears joyful tidings to the protagonist, revealing that their fathers, guided by a dream, arrived in Barzos, where they have been awaiting the arrival of their long lost children.

Kleandros's funeral in Book eight inaugurates the resolution of the protagonists' trials—Book nine begins with a funeral, mixing rejoicing with laments, and ends with a wedding. The lovers' adventures are finally brought to a close through the good deeds of Gnathos, who agrees, for a hefty price, to transport them home in his ship. Once in Barzos, Drosilla and Charikles reunite with their families and return to Phthia, where a joyous marriage follows in the presence of family and loved ones.

*Hysmine and Hysminias* by Eustathios Makrembolites

Written in the second half of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Makrembolites' prose romance is modeled on Achilles Tatius's novelistic romance, *Leucippe and Clitophon*. *HH* is composed in archaizing but syntactically fairly simple prose, and is divided into eleven books.<sup>12</sup>

*HH* is not easy to summarize because its plot is unconventional: in Book one the hero-narrator Hysminias begins his first-person narrative with a description of his native Eurykomis, where the people are celebrating the feast of Diasia. The hero is elected as herald and is sent off along with a servant, Kratisthenes, to the city of Aulikomis; there, he accepts the generous hospitality of the wealthy Sosthenes, who holds a generous banquet in the visitor's honor. Amidst the festivities, Hysminias is struck by the beauty of Sosthenes' daughter, Hysmine, yet he is taken aback by her immodest behavior: she presses her ankle against his foot under the table, touches his hand as she passes the wine, and even tickles and kisses his feet when she washes them after the meal, according to custom. At night, Hysminias is awakened by Kratisthenes and is interrogated

---

<sup>12</sup> Miroslav Marcovich, the most current editor of *HH*, dates the romance of the reign of Manuel I Komennos (1143-1180) (vii). This is indeed one of the possible—and plausible—dating of the romance, but by no means the only one suggested. It has been argued that Makrembolites imitated Basilakes and Prodomos, but it has also been suggested that he was a model for those very same authors. One of the problems with the dating of *HH* is the name of the author, which has been differently transmitted in the manuscripts. In modern scholarship he is variously referred to as *Eumathios* or *Eustathios* Makrembolites, and we are not sure who he was or when he lived. Margaret Alexiou, in her article "A Critical Reappraisal of Eustathios Makrembolites' *Hysmine and Hysminias*," identifies over twenty extant manuscripts of the romance, dating from the 13<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> century and even later. "Seventeen manuscripts are listed by P. Le Bas in the preface to his edition, *De Hysmines et Hysminiae Amoribus Fabula*, in: G. Hirschig, *Erotici Scriptores* (Paris, 1856): two are of the thirteenth century (Vatican A, Barberinus D), one is dated 1365 (Paris G), three are of the fifteenth century (Paris H, Munich Q, R), ten of the sixteenth century (Vatican B, C, Milan F, Paris I, K, L, M, N, O, Munich P), and one undated (Barberinus E)" (25).

about his attentions toward Hysmine, but the hero dismisses Kratisthenes' comments and he instead goes back to sleep.

Books two and three abound with descriptions of allegorical paintings—of Eros, the four cardinal virtues, and the twelve months of the year—interspersed with a series of dreams and waking encounters with Hysmine. In Book two, Hysminias visits the garden with Kratisthenes, and the two examine a large frieze depicting in the central scene a winged and naked youth armed with bow, arrows, swords, and torch, seated on a chariot, and followed by a multitude of people, birds, and beasts. Once again, Hysmine makes immodest advances to Hysminias at the evening meal, and again Kratisthenes teases the hero.

In Book three the hero-narrator describes a sequence of dreams he experiences that night: first, Eros, the figure in the frieze, appears and enrolls him as slave, forcibly joining his hand to Hysmine's. At this point, Hysminias wakes up, panic-stricken, and tells Kratisthenes that he is now a slave of Aphrodite and must renounce his duties as a herald. Kratisthenes, hastingly, dismisses Hysminias' interpretations and goes back to sleep, leaving the hero to indulge in fantasies of his next meeting with Hysmine. The next day, during a walk in the garden, the two men continue arguing on the topic of love until interrupted by Sosthenes, who summons them for yet another meal. This time, however, the hero responds to Hysmine's advances with passionate glares and is unable to eat or drink.

Book four opens with Hysmine and Hysminias's courtship in an enclosed garden, but the embraces of the couple are interrupted shortly by a woman's

voice, calling Hysmine into the house and Hysminias, returning to his chamber, is further admonished by Kratisthenes, who advises him not to confuse duty with passion.

In the feverish dream sequences which open Book five, Hysminias dreams first of love-making, then of Hysmine dressed as a bride, and third of himself in the garden with Hysmine, caught by her mother, Panthia. Hysmine's mother screams abuse at him, and suddenly, a host of avenging women pursues him, threatening to tear him to pieces. He cries out in his sleep to Kratisthenes, who shakes him and explains that the noise is real, pointing toward Sosthenes who is at the door telling them to get up and greet the crowd of people outside who are awaiting to crown Hysminias as herald. During the festivities, Hysminias' parents arrive and invite Sosthenes and his family to Eurycomis, and a lavish banquet is held. At night, while all the parents depart to sacrifice to Zeus Xenios, the hero goes to Hysmine's bedside and the two swear eternal love, but Hysmine refuses to sacrifice her virginity.

Hysminias is woken by his mother at the beginning of Book six in time for yet another banquet, during which Sosthenes announces that he has arranged a good match for Hysmine, and invites the company to take part in the wedding celebrations at Aulikomis. After the meal, while the parents go off to make sacrifices for Hysmine's wedding, Hysminias visits the heroine and laments. The next day Zeus sends an evil omen and the parents resort to making more sacrifices; in the meantime, Kratisthenes seizes the chance to tell the hero that he

has found a boat which will take the three of them to Syria, and goes off to make arrangements for the couple's eloping.

In Book seven, during a further convenient absence of all the parents and Kratisthenes, the hero offers details to Hysmine of their planned elopement, and begs her to sacrifice her virginity. Hysminias's attempt to lie with her, however, is interrupted by Kratisthenes, who enters the chamber of Hysmine with the news that the boat is about to depart. After a day of sailing, however, a terrible storm breaks up and the captain declares that only a human sacrifice will placate Poseidon's wrath. The lot falls on Hysmine and the captain casts her overboard. The lamentations of the bereft Hysminias become so unbearable, however, that the captain abandons him too at the next landing place, where he weeps himself to sleep and dreams of Eros rescuing the heroine.

In Book eight Hysminias is captured by Ethiopian pirates who launch a savage attack on a city and take many of its citizen captives. Three days later, an army of Greeks arrives, vanquishes the pirates, and sells the captives in the city of Daphnopolis as slaves. After praying at the shrine of Apollo, the hero makes his way to the house of his master and mistress. By now almost a year has passed since the hero met his beloved Hysmine, and the feast of Diasia comes around again. This time though, his master is chosen as herald, and Hysminias accompanies him to Aulikomis.

Book nine, begins with the hero, a mere servant recalling his past happiness while in Aulikomis. At the banquet that follows, one of the maidservants attending the host's daughter, Rhodope, looks suspiciously like

Hysmine. She recognizes Hysminias and sends a letter explaining how she was saved by a dolphin and sold as a slave. Under the pretence of being cousins, hero and heroine manage to spend much time together and Hysmine warns her beloved that Rhodope is in love with him, and that Hysmine herself has been trusted by the lady as a messenger.

An exchange of love-letters follows in Book ten, in which the hero writes fondly to Rhodope in order to secure more time with Hysmine. At a solemn sacrifice held at night at an altar, two elderly couples—none other than the parents of the lovers—are found lamenting their lost children. There is a recognition scene, and the priest declares the lovers free, offering protection in his shrine, much to the anger of Rhodope and her father. The priest, however, declares that Greeks, both by law and by nature, must be free, and when the lovers are dragged from the shrine, he threatens to renounce his priesthood unless the crowd returns them unharmed. The crowd takes action, and there is general drinking, dancing, and singing as they are set free.

The festivities that continue the following day and detailed in Book eleven. Here, during a banquet held by a priest, the lovers tell their stories and it is decided that Hysmine should take a virginity test at the springs of Artemis in Daphnopolis. The heroine passes the trial and the protagonists return to Aulikomis to celebrate the wedding and Hysminias draws the concluding moral that love, chastity, and wisdom will be rewarded in spite of reversals of fortune.

*Rhodanthe and Dosikles* by Theodore Prodromos

The romance of *RD* has come down to us in four complete manuscripts, dating between the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> century; their narrative of which is divided into nine books, each with a thematic unity.<sup>13</sup> The first three books set the foundations of the plot by allowing the reader a glimpse into the past experiences of the protagonists, including the introduction of the three main characters and a narration of the adventures that “conspired” to bring them together. The romance opens with the ambush Rhodanthe and Dosikles in an attack by pirates on the town of Rhodes. Hero and heroine are along with many of the natives and a Greek from Cyprus, Kratandros, whom Dosikles befriends. Kratandros’ tale is introduced first: he tells how he was caught in his mistress’s room, and how she had been killed by one of the guards who had mistaken her for him. In his sorrow and remorse, Kratandros pleaded guilty to her murder in the hope of incurring the death penalty, but now acquitted by the court, he is in self-imposed exile. Dosikles, then, reciprocates by telling how he and Rhodanthe came to be in Rhodes, and his tale occupies most of Book two. Kratandros’ narrative, like Dosikles’, begins *in media res*, with the arrival of the pair in the town of Rhodes and their hospitality at the house of a local merchant.

In Book three Dosikles, within his narrative to Kratandros, retells the story

---

<sup>13</sup> Roderick Beaton, in his analysis of the romance, refers to Prodromos as one of the most prolific and influential Byzantine writers. He also notes that *RD* was also “excerpted in a further two [manuscripts], the second from as late as the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This evidence for a continuing readership, as well as the scale of the work, suggest that *Rhodomne and Dosikles* occupied a place of importance among the corpus of one of the most prolific and respected writers of the age” (70).

of his wooing and abduction of Rhodanthe as he had earlier told it to his hosts in Rhodes (the third book contains the conclusion of Dosikles' story, to the point where it links up with the beginning of the main narrative). The pirate chief Gobryas, already introduced in Book one as a capricious master, now attempts to seduce Rhodanthe.<sup>14</sup>

At the beginning of Book four, Gobryas is threatening to make a human sacrifice of the hero and heroine, but fortunately the satrap's superior officer, Mistylos, receives an ultimatum demanding tribute from Bryaxes, king of Pissa, and the sacrifice is postponed. Mistylos, who is also the chief of the pirates, and the king of Pissa prepare for war. Book four also describes in detail the reception by the pirate-chief Mistylos and his trusted man Gobryas, of the envoy Artaxanes who is sent by Bryaxes from Pissa to demand tribute.<sup>15</sup> The envoy is handed over after a formal exchange of letters, to the satrap Gobryas, who is to entertain him royally. Artaxanes, the envoy, is intimidated by the strange feast set before him: a roast lamb is brought to the table and, before all, from its belly flies a flock of live sparrows. Gobryas proceeds to explain that the laws of nature are subject to the will of his master, Mistylos, and goes on to elaborate upon his theme: not only can a "roast lamb be pregnant" with live sparrows, but at Mistylos' command an army of the bravest men in the midst of a battle could find itself suddenly teeming with alien life and giving birth to little dogs. The literal-minded Artaxanes is

---

<sup>14</sup> Books three, four, five, and six constitute the central part of the romance and curiously push the lovers into the wings, as most of the action is concentrated on the larger affairs of the pirates, the outcome of which, depends the fate of the principal characters.

<sup>15</sup> The details of this narrative, like those of the speeches, preparation, and fighting in the two books that follow, are irrelevant to the story of the lovers, who are absent from both scenes.

taken aback by this insinuation of male pregnancy, and the two debate its plausibility. A young acrobat then appears, called Satyrion. To the spectators' distress, the boy cuts his own throat with a sword, but at a word from Gobryas he resurrects himself. The trick had been affected, we learn later, by dramatic illusion. The performance ends with Satyrion singing of the glory of Mistylos and with praise for the singer as craftsman (τεχνιτης).

Book five is entirely taken up with elaborate details of the following battle between the pirates and the Pissans. The central characters, the lovers, are not mentioned much in this book, but their fate depends on the outcome of these events over which they have no influence and of which they are scarcely aware.

In Book six, a spectacular battle is fought and the pirates who are holding Rhodanthe and Dosikles are defeated. At this point, a brutally realistic account of the atrocities associated with the sack of a town is introduced. Hero and heroine are then loaded onto ships and Dosikles witnesses the ship carrying Rhodanthe sink. The heroine, however, is saved, and in due time is brought ashore in Cyprus, where the action of the final part of the romance is set.

Book seven begins with the heroine brought ashore in Cyprus, where the action of the final part of the romance is mainly set. Rhodanthe is now the slave of none other than the parents of Kratandros, the fellow-prisoner of Dosikles. While in Cyprus, she tells her story to her mistress, Myrilla. Myrilla, in turn, reveals that her son must be in captivity in Pissa along with Dosikles, a discovery that brings the two strands of the plot back together. Kratandros' father immediately sets out for Pissa to bring the young men back to Cyprus.

In Book eight the action returns to Pissa, where King Bryaxes is about to execute his captives, Dosikles and Kratandros. The pair manages to dissuade the king from his intended action, and at the crucial moment help arrives in the form of Kratandros' father. Bryaxes, in an unforeseeable twist, however, loses patience and decides to send his victims to the stake after all. This terrible fate is prevented only by a shower of rain. Reunited at the home of Kratandros' parents in Cyprus, the lovers face a final threat to their happiness in the form of Myrilla, who develops an uncontrollable passion for Dosikles and almost succeeds in poisoning Rhodanthe.

The final Book finds the lovers in a great dilemma: should they flee from Cyprus and the overbearing attentions of Myrilla at the cost of insulting their friend and host Kratandros? The problem is soon resolved by factors outside their control: the fathers of the lovers turn up unexpectedly and announce that the two families following a cryptic oracle about their offspring's whereabouts are reconciled, have traveled to Cyprus, and are to approve the match. The romance ends by briefly repeating the journeys of the protagonists, this time from Cyprus to Rhodes and finally home to Abydos.

## VERNACULAR BYZANTINE ROMANCES: 1204-1453<sup>16</sup>

### *Belthandros and Chrysantza*<sup>17</sup>

Belthandros, a prince of the “Romans” (i.e., Byzantines), quarrels with his father, King Rodofilos, and leaves the palace to seek his fortune despite the entreaties of the prince’s elder brother, Filarmos. After leading his small retinue of followers safely through the country of Anatolia (in Asia Minor), he arrives at the southern coast near Tarsus, which the anonymous poet, with historical correctness, places in the medieval kingdom of “Lesser Armenia.” He soon comes upon a stream, containing a band of fire within its current, which he follows until he arrives at a castle. On the castle’s gate of adamant, Belthandros reads an inscription declaring that the man who has never felt the pains of love will immediately suffer them a hundred-thousand-fold if he succeeds in entering.

Inside the castle, which the hero enters alone, he finds only statues and automata, and rooms richly painted and decorated. This is the castle of “Eros the King.” On the walls Belthandros sees two bands of reliefs: the lower one shows

---

<sup>16</sup>In his study of the Greek Romances of the Komnenian and Palaiologan periods, Beaton discerns the following basic sequence of narrative incidents in the vernacular romances of the Palaiologan period: “the stories of the five romances are built upon a common and limited stock of narrative incidents. In each of them a royal prince, ignorant or scornful of Eros, sets out from his home. In a fabulous castle he first sees the princess with whom he is fated to fall in love. About half-way through the series of their adventures their love is consummated, but a setback follows. In two of the five romances [*TA* and *TT*] the setback proves fatal and a happy ending is thwarted. In the other three [*BC*, *KC*, and *LR*] hero and heroine are separated for a time, one or both is believed dead, but the pair is reunited after hair-raising adventures, with the aid of a woman helper who comes to a ‘sticky’ end” (109).

<sup>17</sup>*BC* is only half as long *KC*, amounting to 1,248 lines, and, like *LR*, survives in a single MS—the Paris MS. Beaton reveals that “the Paris manuscript which contains the romance also contains a number of texts dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries which use the more popular linguistic forms favoured in Crete and the Dodecanese, and it is probable that some of the elements of more popular speech and of oral folk-song found in *Belthandros* may not have been present in the original” (105).

men and women tortured by cupids, whereas the upper one displays a group of people in a state of happiness. The couples are labeled with their names and some historical details about their lives. Among the statues in the ornate banqueting hall are two that prove to be the sources of the mysterious river outside: a sapphire statue holds a carved peacock, from the eyes of which pours a stream of tears that becomes the river; close to it stands a male statue, the heart of which is struck by a dart. From the wound pours a stream of fire which mingles with the tears of the other statue to produce the strange river of mingled water and fire that Belthandros has been following.

Beneath the statues the hero finds inscriptions prophesying that he will fall in love with Chrysantza, daughter of the king of Antioch. Belthandros is then summoned into the presence of the lord of the castle, Eros, who announces a beauty contest for the next day, at which Belthandros must give a wand to the most beautiful among forty princesses, whom he is destined to marry. The wand is indeed given to the most beautiful, and Belthandros turns to Eros to sing the praises of the winner's beauty and graces. At the end of this recital however the princesses and Eros vanish abruptly like a dream. Alone again in the banqueting hall of the castle, Belthandros reads the prophetic inscriptions once more and decides to set out for Antioch in search of Chrysantza.

Upon arriving at Antioch, the hero offers himself as a vassal to the king and quickly becomes an intimate of the royal retinue (after having impressed the prince with his archery in a royal hunting expedition). On a later occasion, he meets the King's daughter and it becomes obvious to the hero that Chrysantza

was the most beautiful of the forty princesses, to whom he had given the wand in the castle of Eros. Chrysantza also recognizes Belthandros, but the hero does not express his passion for the beautiful heroine yet; two whole years pass before, overhearing the heroine's sighs of longing in a walled garden, he jumps the wall and the two spend the night together. The escapade does not pass unnoticed, however, and Belthandros is thrown into prison. Chrysantza, in the meantime, devises a plan for his rescue: she lets her lady-in-waiting, Phaidrokaza, into the secret and asks her to pretend it was she whom Belthandros had been visiting the previous night. Phaidrokaza agrees to go through with a formal marriage of convenience to Belthandros so that the latter can continue to visit Chrysantza in secret.

Ten months later, Belthandros becomes weary of the cover-up and the lovers decide to flee with Phaidrokaza and two of Belthandros' retainers. Having successfully eloped, the following day the couple and the two confidants come to a river. In an attempt to cross, hero and heroine become separated and are washed ashore practically naked, while Phaidrokaza and the retainers are drowned. Walking across the banks of the river, the heroine comes upon the corpse of one of Belthandros' retainers which has become unrecognizable from the river, and thinking it is Belthandros, she is about to fall on the dead man's sword, when Belthandros himself appears on the scene to hold her back. Shaken by the death of Phaidrokaza, for which Chrysantza holds them both responsible, the lovers make their way downstream to the sea. There, they are rescued by a ship which Belthandros recognizes as belonging to his father's navy. He succeeds

finally in revealing his true identity to a man on board whom Belthandros identifies, and who, it turns out, has been sent to find Belthandros and inform him that his elder brother is dead (we later learn this man is an entrusted figure in the service of the King). His father, Belthandros learns, is ready to welcome him as his heir, retiring from his royal duties. The lovers are married amid royal celebrations back in Belthandros' native city (which must be Constantinople, although it is not named) and he and Chrysantza are proclaimed King and Queen.

*Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* by Andronikos Komnenos Branas DoukasAngelos Palaiologos<sup>18</sup>

A mighty king, unable to decide which of his three sons should succeed him, sends them out into the world to see which can prove himself worthiest. Kallimachos, the youngest, leads his brothers up a mountain, where they come upon an impregnable castle with monsters and supernatural creatures that lurk behind the ramparts. The less courageous elder brothers soon abandon the quest and return home after giving Kallimachos a magic ring.

The hero marches into the castle to find its interior apparently deserted and opulently furnished. While admiring a painted ceiling of the heavens, the hero's gaze is drawn downwards, toward a nude female figure of indescribable beauty, hanging suspended by the hair. The girl's captor, the ogre (δρακων), whose castle it now turns out to be (assumably taken from some former human resident, the identity of which adds to the suspense), appears and beats his victim mercilessly before the eyes of the hero, who has been watching hidden under a large silver container. Kallimachos eventually manages to kill the ogre, thanks to a tip from the girl, who, relieved from danger, gets a chance to thank her savior

---

<sup>18</sup> *KC* is the only vernacular Byzantine romance whose author is known by name. Beaton comments on the evidence of the authorship claiming that it is found in a "verse epigram by the court poet Manuel Philes which raises Andronikos for his work and gives a sketchy but identifiable summary of the story with added religious exegesis" (104). The 2,607-line romance has come down to us in one manuscript, currently housed in the university library at Leiden. "The manuscript which also contains an incomplete but otherwise seemingly reliable copy of *Libistros* [LR] is believed to date from about 1520, that is, almost exactly two centuries after the composition of the poem. In favour of it being a relatively close copy is its high proportion of learned linguistic forms and complex rhetorical periods, since the predominant trend in manuscript copying by this time was towards a more simplified diction. There are no examples in Greek vernacular literature, however, of a manuscript ever being copied with word-for-word exactitude, so that it would be naïve to suppose that we possess the text exactly as written by Andronikos Palaiologos in the early fourteenth century" (105).

and introduce herself: she is Chrysorrhoe, daughter of a king, and sole survivor of a kingdom ravaged by the ogre in order to possess her. The two protagonists fall almost instantly in love and take a sensuous bath before making love at a river's edge.

For a time, they live happily as lord and lady of the ogre's castle, but the idyll is not destined to last long. The unmarried king of a neighboring country, in the course of a military expedition, falls in love with Chrysorrhoe, whom he has seen leaning over the ramparts. With the aid of a witch, he abducts the heroine, leaving Kallimachos apparently dead on the ground outside the castle.

Fate now intervenes and reveals the hero's troubles to his brothers in a dream. Kallimachos' brothers find the hero's senseless body and revive him by taking from him a golden apple devised by the witch, which has the power to induce apparent death. Immediately upon recovering, Kallimachos sets out in search of his beloved. He comes upon a ploughman and learns that a cruel penance has been laid on the people of an entire country by its king, who awaits the bride he has abducted (Chrysorrhoe) to yield to him.<sup>19</sup> Kallimachos also learns of Chrysorrhoe's adventures and her fidelity to him. She, it turns out, is being held in a palace surrounded by a garden, where the water of an artificial pool constructed to resemble a meadow evaporates rapidly. Miraculously,

---

<sup>19</sup> The penance inflicted is described by the ploughman in detail who claims that his mournful appearance and my shaven head are caused by "the crazed ill of an accursed girl. [. . .] Everybody these days, entire cities and castles, a multitude of people beyond number, is dressed in mourning because of the king's command. Since the woman will not wear anything else on her body we go hungry, we die through abstaining from meat. This woman, this dragoness, this offspring of a dragon, lived, they say, in Dragon's Castle but the king, through a cunning scheme and trick, abducted her and keeps her in his palace. The story goes that she demanded that everybody dress in this black clothing and adopt this gloomy and mournful appearance. [. . .] From these words Kallimachos recognized the lady and her story" (Betts 67).

though, the pool is constantly filled and refilled in order to quench the 'fire' of the heroine's obstinacy.

The hero offers his services as a gardener, and reveals his identity to Chrysorrhoe by hanging a ring in a tree. The heroine, in turn, after much thought about the appearance of the ring in the garden, begins to entertain hopes of a possible reunion with her beloved Kallimachos: she quickly summons the master gardener and asks him to present his handy assistant before her; Chrysorrhoe recognizes the hero immediately, and, without a trace of doubt about his identity, faints. Claiming that her "condition" is much improved by sleeping unattended in the garden, Chrysorrhoe manages to spend her nights in secret with Kallimachos. The eunuchs who have been set to guard her, however, soon make the affair public, and hero and heroine, accused of high treason, are brought before the King. Chrysorrhoe takes the initiative at a crucial moment, and, in a carefully constructed speech, proves to the King that she is already the bride of Kallimachos, and the two are allowed to return to the ogre's castle, which they intend to make their home. Finally, the witch, whose evil arts had only been used to serve the King's wishes, is burnt.

*Libistros and Rhodamne*<sup>20</sup>

This romance is unique among the vernacular Greek romances of the period in telling two stories in parallel: the love-stories of Libistros, the main hero, and his friend and confidant, Klitobos, who is also the narrator.<sup>21</sup> Klitobos, the narrator, addresses in the opening paragraph an audience of a noble lady, Myrtane, and a mixed group of inhabitants of the land of Litavia—we subsequently learn that Myrtane is actually the queen of Litavia.

Libistros, a Frankish prince of an unspecified “Latin” country called Libandros, first hears of the power of love after an incident while hunting; the same night he dreams that he is surrounded by winged and armed cupids—*Ερωτες*—who lead him before the throne of Eros, the king of love and ruler of a palace peopled by allegorical figures. Eros accepts the hero’s submission and declares that he is fated to serve love and marry Rhodamne, daughter of King Chrysos, (“Golden”), of *Αργυροκαστρον*, (“Castle of Silver”). Before Libistros wakes, the whole course of his adventures has been prophesied to him. This dream is followed by another, in which the hero dreams that King Eros introduces

---

<sup>20</sup> *LR* survives in five manuscripts. Beaton’s research of the manuscript tradition of the romance indicates that all surviving manuscripts “vary considerably in length, in sequence of episodes, in language register and most of all in wording” (106), making *LR* one of the most difficult romances to edit. Of all manuscripts, the Escorial (E) MS is faithful overall to the story in its fullest and most detailed form (4,407 lines). The remaining MSS include the Vatican MS (Cod. Vat. gr. 2391), The Naples (N) MS, and the Leiden (S) MS.

<sup>21</sup> The way in which the writer narrates the story of Libistros and that of his confidant Klitobos is very perplexing. The stories are narrated neither concurrently nor seriatim; instead, as Libistros’ adventures unravel, Klitobos reveals those adventures of his that relate to the trials of Libistros, making this sequence of events difficult to follow at times. In this summary I introduce the main events of both stories in the order in which they are supposed to have happened.

him to Rhodamne; so great is Libistros' erotic excitement, though, that he awakes before he can embrace her. The hero then sets off on his travels to find the Castle of Silver.

After two years of wandering, Libistros and his band of retainers pitch camp under the wall of the castle, and are noticed by the inhabitants, including Rhodamne, from the ramparts. The castle is triangular and the wall on each side is surmounted by a series of allegorical statues, representing the virtues, the twelve months of the year, and the attributes of love. One of the hero's men gains entry to the castle, where he wins the confidence of the eunuch set to guard the heroine. Mutual love is gradually established through a lengthy exchange of letters: Libistros watches the letters to his arrows and fires them through a window into Rhodamne's bedchamber, and she, in turn, replies through her eunuch, who is also Libistros' trusted man. After an exchange of rings, Rhodamne agrees to a secret meeting, which takes place when she leaves the castle to go hunting with her entourage. The two make love and swear fidelity. Rhodamne, however, has already been betrothed to Berderichos, king of Egypt; her father, though, is impressed by Libistros also, and proposes a tournament in which the two suitors compete for his daughter's hand. Libistros defeats his rival, who leaves for Egypt, and hero and heroine are married.

The couple lives happily for two years, at the end of which the defeated rival, Berderichos, reappears, this time in disguise. A witch accompanies him and helps him abduct Rhodamne with the use of a magic ring, leaving Libistros apparently dead. Libistros eventually recovers only to find his bride vanished,

sets out alone to find her. After two years of wandering, he meets another wanderer in a similar plight: this is Klitobos, the protagonist of the second story and narrator of both. Together with Klitobos, the hero comes upon a hut in which lives the witch who had provided the magical means for Rhodamne's abduction. She has been abandoned by her former master and is now willing to reveal everything; she is even willing to call for daemonic assistance for Libistros, in return for a promise of clemency. The hero accepts the witch's terms and in the company of Klitobos sets out on magic flying horses, which carry the two across Egypt.

Rhodamne, meanwhile, has been keeping a country inn, at which she asks all visitors for news of Libistros. Once in the same country, Klitobos, having been informed by a witch who provided the magical means for Rhodamne's abduction and who has since been cast off by her former master, volunteers to find her at the inn and explain the situation. After he has done so, Libistros arrives and the three ride off together back across the sea on the witch's magic horses. They return the horses to the witch and Rhodamne learns about the witch's part in her abduction; devastated by the news, the heroine demands that the witch be put to death immediately, and Libistros, despite his earlier promise of clemency, agrees with the wish of his beloved and the witch is put to death.

The reunited couple and Klitobos make their way back to the Castle of Silver, reminding each other along the way of the letters and songs they had exchanged during their earlier courtship. Libistros then rewards Klitobos for his

constant help and companionship with the hand of Rhodamne's sister, Melanthia, and finally Libistros and Rhodamne rule happily over her father's kingdom.

The second story is that of Klitobos, the nephew of an Armenian prince from the fictional province of Litavia, who falls passionately in love with the King's daughter, Myrtane. This is unfortunate, however, because she is already married to a powerful Persian. During her husband's absence, surprisingly, she returns Klitobos' love, but the King notices what is going on and has Klitobos thrown into prison; Myrtane's husband, on his return, is determined to have Klitobos put to death. He escapes, helped by Myrtane's resourcefulness, but has to flee the country and abandon any hope of ever being reunited with her. Some time after this, in his wanderings, Klitobos meets Libistros, who is also in search of a lost love, and his actions become part of the latter's story for a time. After his marriage to Rhodamne's sister, he lives happily with her in the Castle of Silver for several years. After the death of his wife, however, he becomes homesick for Armenia and leaves his friends in order to return there. He arrives to find his beloved Myrtane, who is now a widow, and begins telling the story of his own and Libistros's adventures in the hope of pleasing her and regaining her trust. Klitobos ends the story by telling everyone of his intention to spend his remaining years with Myrtane.

*The Tale of Achilles*<sup>22</sup>

The narrative begins with an invocation to the power of Eros, reminiscent of the preamble of the young hero's adventures in *DA*. Following the invocation, the tale of the pagan Myrmidons begins, concentrating exclusively on the warlike deeds of the hero in the field. Achilles, the long-awaited heir of an unnamed king and queen, learns all the "arts of letters" between the ages of four and eight, before going on to specialize in feats of physical prowess at the age of ten. At the age of four, his beauty is greater than that of all the noblemen's daughters and the young hero even outshines the sun, the stars, and the moon. At fifteen, disguised, Achilles takes part in a tournament hosted by his father and is both impressive and victorious. The young hero is soon overtaken by a strong desire to take part in a battle and his father, assured of his son's prowess and skills, entrusts him with a military campaign against a neighboring king who has invaded Myrmidian territory—the narrator reveals that an enemy king is invading and plundering with a great and powerful army.

With his select retainers, chief among them Patrouklos, Achilles brilliantly rescues a Myrmidian outpost that has long been under siege and pursues his father's enemies back to their own castle. Prior to the chase, Patrouklos,

---

<sup>22</sup> Despite its title, this romance has next to nothing in common with the classical legends surrounding the hero. *TA* or *Διηγήσεις περί του Αχιλλέως*, in its original title, has been transmitted in three MSS of which the fullest version is contained in a manuscript now in Naples, dated to the third quarter of the 15<sup>th</sup> century: *Achilleid*, Biblioteca Nazionale III. B. 27. Ole Smith has provided us with the single most comprehensive dual language edition of the poem, which I also use as reference. Of the other surviving manuscripts, Beaton claims, "a less detailed version, following the lines of N [the Naples MS] but often independent in wording, is contained in a late fifteenth-century manuscript in the British Library. Another version, this time of the sixteenth century, exists in the Bodleian library, Oxford, and has been published no fewer than three times. This third version is generally accepted as being little more than a *précis*" (104).

Achilles' cousin, warns the hero about the power of love, for if it happens, he will certainly learn what it means: namely, to reject one's family in order to follow the loved one. To give this warning substance, Patrouklos declares that he himself does not fear the present dangerous expedition: he is in love himself, and to him that is all that matters, for love devours his heart (304 ff).<sup>23</sup>

Achilles marches towards the besieged castle and as he approaches it, he notices a group of women looking down from the walls; among them is the daughter of the defeated king, three of whose sons Achilles has killed. The hero falls in love with her at first sight, and the harsh world of battles and male prowess is replaced in the narrative with a series of elaborate ekphrases of the beauties of the girl, her palace, and her chamber in particular. Achilles appears so smitten with love that he commissions the painting of a picture of Eros, which he worships almost as a relic.

The hero is greeted by the inhabitants of the castle he has come to relieve and is soon acclaimed king. The people entreat him not to return to his home castle but instead to live among them. Since Achilles has fallen in love with the girl, he favors this idea and writes to his father to announce the victory and to convince him and his mother to move. The hero argues that they should stay in the newly acquired territory to defend the country against new attacks from a nearby enemy (664-708). The news about the victory is received with immense joy by Achilles' parents, in turn, who celebrate for ten days and join their son, the newly acclaimed "νεος βασιλευς," new king.

---

<sup>23</sup> Patrouklos's love affair is no more heard of in the romance; there is no second pair of lovers in the *Achilleid* as we have it.

The girl, who like Digenes's bride remains unnamed throughout the story, is at first conceited and rejects the hero's letters until Eros himself appears to her in a dream and convinces her that she is meant for the hero. She finally reciprocates Achilles' love, having been struck by the arrows of the winked god apparently while asleep.<sup>24</sup> The pair first meets face to face when Achilles enters the enclosed garden and they spend the night together.

The garden has been laid out by the girl's father as a token of his love and has high walls decorated with mosaics and an impressively worked iron gate. The description of the enclosed garden is introduced with a statement by the narrator about his inability to describe the wonders of the garden (768-69), the details of which are strongly suggestive of love: the trees are inhabited by Ερωτες, cupids, on every brunch. After the union of the couple in the garden, Achilles declares that he will abduct the heroine the following night exactly at midnight. Precisely at the promised hour, the hero makes his heroic entry: he evades the garden and demonstrates his prowess by demolishing the walls of the heroine's castle, causing the collapse of the whole ornate chamber.

The fate of the protagonists follows the pattern of Digenes' eloping of the general's daughter: Achilles divides his men into two groups and sends off Patrouklos at the head of the group together with the girl (1359-73). He himself waits with the other group to divert any pursuers. The abduction is soon discovered, however, the girl's brothers ride out in pursuit of the abductor. Their

---

<sup>24</sup> The heroine, astounded by the power Eros who work wonders even while his victims are in deep sleep, confesses to the reader that the arrows of Eros are solely responsible for her behavior from now on: "Ερωσ σαγταν εσυρεν και εκατεφονευσε με, / και εις ποθον της αγαπης σου ηφερεν την ψυχην μου" (N 1103-05).

army is defeated, yet the brothers are spared and agree to attend the wedding of the couple. A tournament is held in honor of the hero and his bride and Achilles is victorious, once more, defeating a Frankish knight who has managed to throw off every contestant, including Patrouklos (1542-96). After six years of happiness, however, the girl falls ill. In long speeches she takes her leave, and Achilles mourns her, praying not to outlive her. The romance ends with the burial of the girl and the hero's inconsolable grief.

*The Tale of Troy*<sup>25</sup>

The romance is divided into three main thematic sections: the first (1-779) relates the events before the Trojan War, focusing Paris's birth and upbringing, the second (780-1138) narrates the War itself, focusing on the romance of Helen and Paris, and the third (1139-ff) serves as an epilogue, expressing in an almost crude annalistic form the fates of all the other participants of the War, with minimum attention to the previous two sections.

The tale begins with Hekabe's prophetic dream regarding the birth of Paris in the palace of Priam, which is poorly described in a short ekphrasis (50-ff). Priam, devastated by the portent, summons soothsayers, philosophers, and court magicians in an attempt to interpret "the mystery of the horrific dream," "του μυστηριου του φρικτου της φαντασιας εκεινης" (73), and save his kingdom from a disastrous predicament. The μαντα, (soothsayers), advise Priam to slaughter his offspring "to prevent the ensuing destruction of Troy"— "μηπως η Τροια παρ' αυτου αφανισμον εκλαβη" (84). There follows a series

---

<sup>25</sup> Despite its title, the work owes little to Homer and nothing at all to the Greek translation of Sainte-More de Benoit's 12<sup>th</sup> century French *Roman de Troie*. In essence, it does for Paris what the *TA* had done for Achilles: it weaves a romance about a legendary name, with limited respect for the background from where the characters were originally drawn. The *TT* or Πολεμος της Τρωαδος is in reality the romance of Paris: like in the Byzantine *Achilleid*, *TT* celebrates the exploits of a Homeric hero in the framework of the Byzantine romance; but unlike the Byzantine Achilles, the Paris of *TT* is recognizable as an elaboration of the classical figure. The romance, which consists of 1,166 lines, survives in a single, 16<sup>th</sup> century manuscript (Par. Suppl. Gr. 926 of the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris). Beaton believes that are good reasons for supposing that, "this [romance] was the last of the original romances to be written. ... If it was indeed the source for the interpolated ending of the N version of the *Tale of Achilles*, a date quite shortly after the fall of Constantinople seems most probable" (107).

of expedients designed to prevent the destruction of the city foretold should Paris grows to manhood (101-49).

The infant Paris, like Moses, is put out to sea in a basket and is later washed ashore near Tarsos, opposite the island of Mitylene (124-ff) and found an affluent citizen by the name of Selinios, who trusts the infant in the care of his shepherds. Paris, although reared by shepherds and shepherdesses, spends most of his adolescent years secluded in a splendidly decorated tower.

Following the steps of former young heroes like Achilles, Alexander, and Digenes, Paris sets out from home in search of valor and derring-do, but his quest is short-lasting: caught in a terrible storm, the hero is shipwrecked on an unspecified island, where he is rescued (again) by a band of monks who occupy a nearby monastery (453 ff). Once recovered, the hero discovers that the island is also shared by the beautiful Helen, who keeps vigil in a lovely castle near the monastery. All the Greek heroes of the world come by land and sea to court her and praise her beauty. Menelaos prevails among the men in wooing Helen, but no sooner is he married to her, than he has to depart on an expedition (463-578).<sup>26</sup> Paris, in the meantime, in the guise of a monk, enters the castle and manages to impress the retainers there by his courtly bearing of feats of arms. Before long, he and Helen have fallen in love, and the couple lives clandestinely as man and wife in the castle. Helen's pregnancy soon betrays them, however, and in order to

---

<sup>26</sup> The most important variation in this episode from its description in the *Illiad* is that Menelaus is presented as a poor man, perhaps to foreshadow in a more plausible way the arrival of a potential rival (522 ff) and to explain the need of an oath.

avoid execution, the couple escapes by sea and turns up shortly afterwards back to Troy.

After the union of the lovers, a setback common to most Byzantine romances occurs: the Greeks prepare for an expedition against Troy, and the fates of Paris and Helen are overshadowed by larger events. The Greek heroes arrive in their ships to Troy, and the author at this point unrolls a series of themes, all well-known from the *Illiad*: the catalogue of ships (786 ff), Achilles' withdrawal from battle because of his love for Briseis / Chryseis (800 ff), the plague (820 ff), Achilles' stay on the island of Skyros at the court of King Lycomedes (836 ff), next, the fight between Menelaus and Paris (897 ff), the killing of Hector (955 ff), the prophesied killing of Achilles by the ambush of Paris and Deiphobus (965 ff), the building of the horse and the capture of Troy (987 ff), Pyrrhus' slaughtering of Priam and his family (1030 ff), and lastly, the funeral of Achilles (1080 ff). After the sacrifice of Priam and his daughters on the burial mount of Achilles, the romance of Paris ends with a lament for the passing of the glory of Paris's victims.

## Works Cited

## I. Primary Sources

- Alexiou, Stylianos. *Βασιλειος Διγενης Ακριτης και το Ασμα του Αρμουρη* [*Basileios Digenes Akrites kai to Asma tou Armoure*]. Athens: Ερμης [Hermes], 1985.
- Aristotle. *Parva Naturalia*. Ed. William David Ross. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955.
- Artemidorus, Daldianus. *Oneirocritica: The Interpretation of Dreams*. Trans. Robert J. White. Park Ridge, NJ: Noyes Press, 1975.
- Belthandros and Chrysantza*. In Kriaras. 87-128.
- Betts, Gavin, ed. and trans. *Three Medieval Greek Romances: "Velthandros and Chrysantza," "Kallimachos and Chryssorroi," "Livistros and Rodamni."* New York: Garland, 1995.
- Boethius. *The Consolation of Philosophy*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962.
- Chariton. *Chaereas and Callirhoe*. Trans. Bryan P. Reardon. In Reardon. 17-124.
- Digenis Akritas*. Ed. and trans. John Mavrogordato. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956.
- Eugenianos, Niketas. *Drosilla and Charikles. Il Romanzo del XII Secolo*. Ed. and trans. Fabrizio Conca. Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1994.
- Frazer, Richard M., ed. and trans. *The Trojan War: The Chronicles of Dictys of Crete and Dares the Phrygian*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966.
- Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. *Roman de la Rose*. Trans. Charles Dahlberd. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971.
- Heliodorus of Emesa. *An Ethiopian Story*. Trans. J. R. Morgan. In Reardon. 349-588.
- Hesiod. *Homeric Hymns, Epic Cycle, Homeric*. Trans. Hugh G. Evelyn-White. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936.
- Holton, David, ed. *The Tale of Alexander: The Rhymed Version*. Thessalonike: Philopseke Schole Panepistemiou Thessalonikes [Φιλοσοφικη Σχολη Πανεπιστημιου Θεσσαλονικης], 1974.

- Imperios and Margarona*. In Kriaras. 199-233.
- Kratz, Dennis M., ed. *The Romances of Alexander*. New York: Garland, 1991.
- Kroll, W., ed. and trans. *The Alexander Romance: Historia Alexandri Magni (Pseudo-Callisthenes) I Recensio Vetusta*. Berlin, 1926.
- Kyng Alisaunder*. Ed. G. V. Smithers. Early English Text Society o.s. 227, 237. London: Oxford University Press, 1952 (rpt. 1961), 1957 (rpt. 1969).
- Lavagnini, Bruno, ed. *Eroticorum Graecorum Fragmenta Papyracea*. Leipzig: Teubner, 1922.
- Longus. *Daphnis and Chloe*. Trans. Paul Turner. New York: Penguin, 1989.
- Makrembolites, Eustathios. *Hysmine and Hysminias. Erotici Scriptores Graeci*. Ed. Rudolf Hercher. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1859.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *De Ismeniae et Ismenes Amoribus Libri XI*. Ed. Miroslav Marcovich. Munich: Saur, 2001.
- Manasses, Constantine. *Aristandros and Kallithea. Il Romanzo Bizantino del XII Secolo*. Ed. and trans. Fabrizio Conca. Torino: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1994.
- Palaiologos, Andronikos Komnenos Branas. *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*. In Kriaras. 19-81.
- Phlorios and Platzia-Phlora*. Kriaras, Emmanuel, ed. [Κριαρας, Εμμανουηλ] *Βυζαντινα Ιπποτικα Μυθιστορηματα*. Athens: Zacharopoulos [Ζαχαροπουλος], 1959. 133-178.
- Prodromos, Theodore. *Rodanthe and Dosiklis. Erotici Scriptores Graeci*. Ed. Rudolf Hercher. Leipzig: Teubner, 1859. 159-286.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *De Rhodanthes et Dosiklis Amoribus Libri IX*. Ed. Miroslav Marcovich. Stuttgart: Teubner, 1992.
- Pseudo-Callisthenes. *The Alexander Romance*. Trans. Ken Dowen. In Reardon. 650-735.
- Reardon, Bryan P., ed. *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989.

- Sathas, Konstantine N. *Mesaionike Bibliotheke / Bibliotheca Greaca Medii Aevi. 7 Vols.* Venice and Paris, 1872-94.
- Statius, Publius Papinius. *Achilleid.* Ed. O. A. Dilke. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1954.
- Tatius, Achilles. *Leucippe and Clitophon.* Trans. Stephen Gaselee. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1969.
- The History of Alexander's Battles: Historia de Preliis—The J<sup>1</sup> Version.* Trans. R. Telfryn Pritchard. Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1992.
- The Story of Apollonius, King of Tyre.* Trans. Gerald N. Sandy. In Reardon. 736-72.
- Walter of Châtillon. *The Alexandreis of Walter of Châtillon: A Twelfth Century Epic: A Verse Translation.* Trans. David Townsend. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996.
- Xenophon of Ephesus. *An Ephesian Tale.* Trans. Graham Anderson. In Reardon. 125-69.

## II. Secondary Sources

- Adolf, Helen. "Christendom and Islam in the Middle Ages: New Light on 'Grail Stone' and 'Hidden Host'." *Speculum* 32 (1957): 103-15.
- Aerts, Willem J. "Alexander the Great in 'Exempla' and 'Similitudines' in Byzantine Literature" *Exemplum et Similitudo: Alexander the Great and Other Heroes as Points of Reference in Medieval Literature*. Ed. Willem J. Aerts and M. Gosman. Groningen: Mediaevalia Groningana, 1988.
- Agapitos, Panagiotis. "The Erotic Bath in the Byzantine Vernacular Romance *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*." *Classica et Mediaevalia* 41: 257-73.
- Alexiou, Margaret. "A Critical Reappraisal of Eustathios Makrembolites' *Hysmine and Hysminias*." *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 3 (1977): 23-43.
- Alpers, Paul. *What Is Pastoral?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Alpers, Svetlana Leontief. "Describe or Narrate? A Problem in Realistic Representation." *New Literary History* 8 (1976): 16-41.
- Anderson, Andrew R. *Alexander's Gate, Gog and Magog, and the Inclosed Nations*. Cambridge, Mass.: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1932.
- Anderson, Graham. *Ancient Fiction: The Novel in the Graeco-Roman World*. Totowa, N.J.: Barnes and Noble, 1984.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Achilles Tatius: A New Interpretation." *The Greek Novel: AD 1-1985*. Ed. Roderick Beaton. New York: Croom Helm, 1988. 190-93.
- Angold, Michael. *Byzantium: The Bridge from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*. New York: St Martin's Press, 2001.
- Armstrong, John. *The Paradise Myth*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail M. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist, Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001.
- Baldry, Harold Capane. *Ancient Utopias*. Southampton: University of Southampton, 1956.
- Baldwin, Charles Sears. *Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic (to 1400) Interpreted from Representative Works*. New York: Macmillan, 1928.

- Bartsch, Shadi. *Decoding the Ancient Novel: The Reader and the Role of Description in Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.
- Bayham, E. "Who Put the 'Romance' in the Alexander Romance?: The Alexander Romance within Alexander Historiography." *Ancient History Bulletin* 9.1 (1995): 1-13.
- Beaton, Roderick. "Epic and Romance in the Twelfth Century." *Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art and Music: A Collection of Essays*. Ed. Anthony Robert Littlewood. Oxford: Oxbow, 1995. (81-91).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Greek Novel: AD 1-1985*. New York: Croom Helm, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Medieval Greek Romance*. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- Beckingham, C. F. *Between Islam and Christendom: Travelers, Facts, and Legends in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*. London: Variorum Reprints, 1983.
- Biow, Douglas. *Mirabile Dictu: Representations of the Marvelous in Medieval and Renaissance Epic*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996.
- Bloch, Ernst. *The Spirit of Utopia*. Trans. Anthony Nassar. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Principle of Hope*. Cambridge, Mass.: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1986.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*. Trans. Jack Zipes and Frank Mecklenburg. Cambridge, Mass.: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1988.
- Bloomfield, Paul. *Imaginary Worlds of the Evolution of Utopia*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1932; reprinted, Norwood: Norwood Editions, 1976.
- Bowersock, Glenn Warren. *Fiction as History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Hellenism in Late Antiquity*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994.
- Bowie, Ewen L. "The Greek Novel." *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature. Vol. II: Greek Literature*. Eds. P. E. Easterling and B. M. W. Knox. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1985. 683-99.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Readership of Greek Novels in Ancient World." In Tatum . 435-60.

- Braun, Martin. *History and Romance in Graeco-Oriental Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1938.
- Brown, W. "Some Hellenistic Utopias." *Classical Weekly* 48 (1955): 57-62.
- Browning, Robert. "Tradition and Originality in Literary Criticism and Scholarship." *Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art, and Music: A Collection of Essays*. Ed. Anthony Robert Littlewood. Oxford: Oxbow, 1995. 17-28.
- Campbell, Mary B. *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400-1600*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988.
- Camille, Michael. "Seeing and Reading: Some Visual Implications of Medieval Literacy and Illiteracy." *Art History* 8 (1985): 26-49.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Image-Making in Medieval Art*. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Carrier, David. "Ekphrasis and Interpretation: Two Modes of Art History Writing." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 27 (1987): 20-31.
- Cary, George. *The Medieval Alexander*. Ed. D. J. A Ross. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1956.
- Cheetham, Nicolas. *Mediaeval Greece*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.
- Cioran, Emile Michel. *History and Utopia*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Seaver Books, 1986.
- Clark, Donald Lemen. "Rhetoric and the Literature of the English Middle Ages." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 45 (1959): 19-28.
- Clark, Michael, ed. *Revenge of the Aesthetic: The Place of Literature in Theory Today*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.
- Classen, Albrecht, ed. *Meeting the Foreign in the Middle Ages*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Self, the Other, and Everything in Between: Xenological Phenomenology of the Middle Ages." In Classen. (xi-lxxiii).

- Curtius, Ernst Robert. *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*. Trans. Willard R. Trask. New York: Pantheon Books, 1953.
- Cutler, Anthony. "Originality as a Cultural Phenomenon." *Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art and Music: A Collection of Essays*. Ed. Anthony Robert Littlewood. Oxford: Oxbow, 1995. (203-16).
- Dana, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. "Medieval Visions of the Other World." Diss. Harvard University, 1910.
- Davidson, Clifford, ed. *The Iconography of Heaven*. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1994.
- Davidson, Clifford, and Thomas H. Seiler, eds. *The Iconography of Hell*. Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1992.
- Delumeau, Jean. *History of Paradise: The Garden of Eden in Myth and Tradition*. Trans. Matthew O'Connell. New York: Continuum, 1995.
- Dinzelbacher, Peter. "The Way to the Other World in Medieval Literature and Art." *Folklore* 97 (1986): 70-87.
- Easterling, P. E. and B. M. W. Knox, eds. *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature I: Greek Literature*. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Easting, Robert. *Visions of the Other World in Middle English*. Cambridge, Eng.: D. S. Brewer, 1997.
- Eliade, Mircea. *The Myth of the Eternal Return*. Trans. W. R. Trask. New York: Pantheon, 1954.
- Elliott, Robert C. *The Shape of Utopia: Studies in a Literary Genre*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970.
- Elsner, John. "From the Pyramids to Pausanias and Piglet: Monuments, Travel and Writing," in *Art and Text in ancient Greek Culture*. Goldhill, Simon and Robin Osborne, eds. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Emerson, Swango Jan, and Hugh Feiss, eds. *Imagining Heaven in the Middle Ages: A Book of Essays*. New York: Garland, 2000.
- Emerson, Richard Kenneth, and Ronald B. Herzman. *The Apocalyptic Imagination in Medieval Literature*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992.

- Ferguson, John. *Utopias of the Classical World*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1975.
- Fleming, John V. "The Garden of the *Roman de la Rose*: Vision of Landscape or Landscape of Vision." *Medieval Gardens*. Ed. Elisabeth B. MacDougall. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1986.
- Finlayson, John. "The Marvelous in Middle English Romance." *Chaucer Review* 33:4 (1999): 363-408.
- Finley, Moses I. *The Use and Abuse of History*. New York: Viking Press, 1975.
- Flint, Valerie I. J. "Monsters and the Antipodes in the Early Middle Ages and Enlightenment." *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 15 (1984): 65-80.
- Frantz, Alison. "Digenis Akritas: A Byzantine Epic and Its Illustrations" *Byzantion* 15 (1941): 126-49.
- Frye, Northrop. *The Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976.
- Gardiner, Eileen. *Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell: A Sourcebook*. New York: Garland, 1993.
- Genette, Gerard. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981.
- Giangrande, Giuseppe. "On the Origins of the Greek Romance." *Erano* 60 (1962): 132-59.
- Giamatti, Bartlett A. *The Earthly Paradise and the Renaissance Epic*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966.
- Goldhill, Simon and Robin Osborne, eds. *Art and Text in ancient Greek Culture*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Goldhill, Simon. "The Naïve and Knowing Eye: Ecphrasis and the Culture of Viewing in the Hellenistic World" in *Art and Text in ancient Greek Culture*. Goldhill, Simon and Robin Osborne, eds. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Haag, Tomas. *Narrative Technique in Ancient Greek Romances: Studies of Chariton, Xenophon Ephesius, and Achilles Tatius*. Stockholm and Lund: P. Astrom, 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Novel in Antiquity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.

- \_\_\_\_\_. "Callirhoe and Parthenope: the Beginnings of the Historical Novel." *Classical Antiquity* 6/2 (1987). 184-204.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Beginnings of the Historical Novel." *The Greek Novel: AD 1-1985*. Ed. Roderick Beaton. New York: Croom Helm, 1998. 169-81.
- Haight, Elizabeth Hazelton, ed. *Essays on the Greek Romance*. New York: Longman, 1943.
- Haldon, John. *Byzantium: A History*. Gloucestershire, Eng.: Tempus, 2000.
- Hartog, Francois. *Memories of Odysseus: Frontier Tales from Ancient Greece*. Trans. Janet Lloyd. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- Heffernan, James A. W. "Ekphrasis and Representation." *New Literary History* 22 (1991): 297-316.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Museum of Words: The Poetics of Ekphrasis from Homer to Ashbery*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.
- Heiserman, Arthur Ray. *The Novel Before the Novel*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977.
- Hock, Ronald F., and Edward N. O'Neil, eds. *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric: Vol. I: The Progymnasmata*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986.
- Hock, Ronald F. "The Rhetoric of Romance." *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period 330B.C. – A.D. 400*. Ed. Stanley E. Porter. New York: Brill, 1997.
- Hollander, John. "Words and Pictures: Ekphrasis." *Art and Antiques* 3 (1984): 80-91.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Poetics of Ekphrasis." *Word and Image* 4 (1998): 209-19.
- Holzberg, Niklas. *The Ancient Novel: An Introduction*. Trans. Christine Jackson Holzberg. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Hornaday, Aline G. "Visitors from Another Space: The Medieval Revenant as Foreigner." In Classen. (71-95).
- Howard, Donald R. *The Three Temptations: Medieval Man in Search of the World*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966.

- Hunter, Richard Lawrence. *A Study of Daphnis and Chloe*. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Hutchinson, Steven. "Mapping Utopias." *Modern Philology* 85:2 (1987): 170-85.
- Jauss, Hans Robert. *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982.
- James, Liz, and Ruth Webb. "'To Understand Ultimate Things and Enter Secret Places': Ekphrasis and Art in Byzantium." *Art History* 14 (1991): 1-17.
- Jenkins, Romilly. "The Hellenistic Origins of Byzantine Literature." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 17 (1963): 37-52.
- Kazhdan, Alexander Petrovich and Michael McCormick. "The Social World of the Byzantine Court" *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*. Ed. Henry Maguire. Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Research Library: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Innovation in Byzantium." *Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art, and Music: A Collection of Essays*. Ed. Anthony Robert Littlewood. Oxford: Oxbow, 1995. 1-14.
- Kazhdan, Aleksei Petrovich, and Ann Wharton Epstein. *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985.
- Kazhdan, Aleksei Petrovich, and S. Franklin. *Studies On Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1984.
- Kennedy, George Alexander. *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1980.
- Kenseth, Joy, ed. *The Age of the Marvelous*. Hanover, N. H.: Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College, 1991.
- Kensmer, J. "Ekphrasis as Frame in Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe*." *Classical Weekly* 67 (1973): 166-71.
- Kolve, V. A. *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984.
- Konstan, David. "*Apollonius, King of Tyre* and the Greek Novel." In Tatum. 173-82.

- Krappe, Alexander Haggerty. "The Subterranean Voyage." *Philological Quarterly* 20 (1941): 119-30.
- Kriaras, Emmanuel. *Lexiko tes Mesaionikes Ellenikes Demodous Grammateias* [Λεξικό της Μεσαιωνικής Ελληνικής Δημοδους Γραμματείας], 1100–1669. Thessalonike: 1968-1975.
- Krieger, Murray. *The Aims of Representation: Subject, Text, History*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992.
- Kustas, G. L. "Rhetoric and the Holy Spirit." *Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art and Music: A Collection of Essays*. Ed. Anthony Robert Littlewood. Oxford: Oxbow, 1995. (29-37).
- Lach, Donald Frederick. *The Century of Discovery*. Vol. 1 of *Asia in the Making of Europe*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965.
- Lagercrantz, Olof. *From Hell to Paradise*. Trans. Alan Blair. New York: Washington Square, 1966.
- Laiou, Angeliki E. and Henry Maguire, eds. *Byzantium: A World Civilization*. Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library, 1992.
- Lampakes, Stelios. *Oi Katabaseis ston Kato Kosmo sten Byzantine kai ste Metabyzantine Logotechnia*. [Οι Καταβάσεις στον Κάτω Κόσμο στην Βυζαντινή και στη Μεταβυζαντινή Λογοτεχνία]. Doctoral Thesis: Philosophike Schole Panepistemiou Ioanninon, 1982.
- Lecoq, Danielle, and Roland Schaer. "Ancient, Biblical, and Medieval Traditions." *Utopia: The Search for the Ideal Society in the Western World*. Eds. Roland Schaer, Gregory Claeys, and Lyman Tower Sargent. New York: The New York Public Library, 2000.
- Le Goff, Jacques. *The Medieval Imagination*. Trans. Arthur Goldhammer. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- Leshock, David B. "Religious Geography: Designating Jews and Muslims as Foreigners in Medieval England." *Meeting the Foreign in the Middle Ages*. Ed. Albrecht Classen. New York: Routledge, 2002. (202-25).
- Lesky, Albin. *A History of Greek Literature*. Trans. Willis, J. and C. de Heer. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Crowell, 1966.

- Lesser, Wendy. *The Life Below the Ground: A Study of the Subterranean in Literature and History*. Boston: Faber and Faber, 1987.
- Lewis, Clive Staples. *Studies in Words*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1967.
- Littlewood, Anthony R., Henry Maguire, and Wolshke-Bulmahn, eds. *Byzantine Garden Culture*. Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Library Collection, distributed by Harvard University Press, 2002.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Gardens of the Palaces" *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*. Ed. Henry Maguire. Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Research Library: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Littlewood, Anthony Robert, ed. *Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art, and Music: A Collection of Essays*. Oxford: Oxbow, 1995.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Gardens of Byzantium." *Journal of Garden History*. 12 (1992): 125-53.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Romantic Paradises: the Role of the Garden in Romance." *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 5 (1979): 95-114.
- Lotman, Jurij M. *The Structure of the Artistic Text*. Trans. Ronald and Gail Vroon. Michigan Slavic Contributions 7. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1977.
- MacAlister, Suzanne. *Dreams and Suicides: The Greek Novel From Antiquity to the Byzantine Empire*. New York: Routledge, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Ancient Greek Novel in its Social and Cultural Context." *Classicum* 17 (1991): 37-43.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Byzantine Twelfth Century Romances: A Relative Chronology." *BMGS* 15 (1991): 175-210.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Ancient and Contemporary in Byzantine Novels." In Tatum. 308-22.
- MacCulloch, John Arnott. *Early Christian Visions of the Other-World*. Edinburgh, 1912.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Harrowing of Hell: A Comparative Study of an Early Christian Doctrine*. Edinburgh, 1930.
- Magdalino, Paul. *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Byzantium*. Brookfield, VT: Gower, 1991.

- Maguire, Henry. "Gardens and Parks in Constantinople." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 54 (2000): 251-64.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*. Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Collection, Harvard University Press, 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Heavenly Court" *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*. Ed. Henry Maguire. Washington D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Research Library: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Originality in Art Criticism." *Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art and Music: A Collection of Essays*. Ed. Anthony Robert Littlewood. Oxford: Oxbow, 1995. (101-14).
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Art and Eloquence in Byzantium*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.
- Mango, Cyril. *Byzantine Literature as a Distorting Mirror*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome*. New York: Scribner, 1980.
- Manuel, Frank Edward. *Utopias and Utopian Thought*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1967.
- \_\_\_\_\_. and Fritzie P. Manuel. *Utopian Thought in the Western World*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979.
- McClung, William-Alexander. *The Architecture of Paradise: Survivals of Eden and Jerusalem*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.
- McDannell, Colleen and Bernhard Lang. *Heaven: A History*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.
- McGinn, Bernard. *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979.
- Merkle, Stefan. "Telling the True Story of the Trojan War. The Eyewitness Account of Dictys of Crete." In Tatum. 183-98.
- Mitchell, W. J. Thomas. *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Going too Far with the Sister Arts." *Space, Time, Image, Sign: Essays on Literature and the Visual Arts*. Ed. James A. W. Heffernan. 1-15.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Ekphrasis and the Other." *South Atlantic Quarterly* 91 (Summer 1992): 695-719.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Spatial Form in Literature: Toward a General Theory." *The Language of Images*. Ed. W.J.T Mitchell. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990. 271-99.
- Montaigne, Michel. "Of Cannibals." *The Complete Essays of Montaigne*. Trans. Donald M. Frame. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995. 150-59.
- Morgan, John R. "History, Romance, and Realism in the *Aithiopika* of Heliodorus." *Classical Antiquity* 1 (1982): 221-65.
- Morgan, John R., and Richard Stoneman, eds. *Greek Fiction: The Greek Novel in Context*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Mullett, Margaret E. "Originality in Byzantine Letter: The Case of Exile." In Littlewood. 39-58.
- Mumford, Lewis. *The Story of Utopias*. New York: Viking Press, 1962.
- Negley, Glenn. *Utopian Literature: A Bibliography with a Supplementary Listing of Works Influential in Utopian Thought*. Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1977.
- Nelson, Robert S., ed. *Visuality Before and Beyond the Renaissance*. Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Newton, Arthur P., ed. *Travel and Travelers in the Middle Ages*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1926.
- The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. Ed. Alexander P. Kazhdan. Vol. 1-3. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.
- The Oxford History of Byzantium*. Ed. Cyril Mango. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- Patch, Howard Rollin. "Some Elements in Medieval Descriptions of the Otherworld." *PMLA* 33 (1918): 601-43.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Tradition of Boethius: A Study of His Importance in Medieval Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1935.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Other World According to Descriptions in Medieval Literature*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950.

- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Goddess Fortuna in Medieval Literature*. New York: Octagon Books, 1967.
- Perry, Ben E. "Chariton and His Romance from a Literary-Historical Point of View." *American Journal of Philology* 51 (1930): 93-134.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Ancient Romances: A Literary-Historical Account of their Origins*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967.
- Philippides, Stamatias. "Lovers' Fate: Narrator's Providence in *Chaereas and Callirhoe*." *The Greek Novel: AD 1-1985*. Ed. Roderick Beaton. New York: Croom Helm, 1988. 184-89.
- Pliny. *Pliny's Natural History: An Account by a Roman of What Romans Knew and Did and Valued*. Ed. and Trans. Loyd Haberly. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1957.
- Pradeau, Jean-Francois. "Plato's Atlantis: The True Utopia" *Utopia: The Search for the Ideal Society in the Western World*. Eds. Roland Schaer, Gregory Claeys, and Lyman Tower Sargent. New York: The New York Public Library, 2000.
- Radford, Jean B., ed. *The Progress of Romance: The Politics of Popular Fiction*. New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986.
- Rand, Edward Kennard. "Mediaeval Gloom and Mediaeval Uniformity." *Speculum* 1 (1926): 253-68.
- Rattenbury, Robert Mantle. "Romance: The Greek Novel." In *New Chapters in the History of Greek Literature: Some Recent Discoveries in Greek Poetry and Prose of the Classical And Later Periods*. Ed. J. U. Powell. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Romance: Traces of Lost Greek Novels." *New Chapters in the History of Greek Literature*. Vol. III. Eds. J. U. Powell and E. A. Barber. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933. 211-57.
- Reardon, Bryan P. "The Greek Novel." *Phoenix* 23 (1969): 291-309.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Theme, Structure, and Narrative in Chariton." *Yale Classical Studies* 27 (1982): 1-27.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Form of Greek Romance*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Μυθος ου λογος: Longus's Lesbian Pastorals." In Tatum. 135-47.
- Rhetores Graeci*. Ed. Leonardi Spengel. (Vol. I-III). Leipzig: Teubner, 1956.

- Robertson, Malcolm J. *Literariness and the Structure of Medieval Otherworld Tales*. Dissertation Abstracts. Ann Arbor, 42:2 (1981): 1555C.
- Romm, James S. *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought: Geography, Exploration, and Fiction*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.
- Ross, Stephanie. *What Gardens Mean*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998.
- Roueche, Charlotte. "Byzantine Writers and Readers: Storytelling in the Eleventh Century." Ed. Roderick Beaton. *The Greek Novel AD: 1-1985*. New York: Croom Helm, 1998. 123-33.
- Safran, Linda, ed. *Heaven on Earth: Art and the Church in Byzantium*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998.
- Said, Suzanne. "The City in the Greek Novel." *The Search for the Ancient Novel*. Ed. James Tatum. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994. 216-36.
- Sargent, Tower Lyman. "The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited." *Utopian Studies* 5 no. 1 (1994): 1-37.
- Scafi, Alessandro. *The Notion of Earthly Paradise from the Patristic Era to the 15<sup>th</sup> Century*. Diss. Warburg Institute, School of Advanced Study, University of London, Dec. 1999.
- Schaer, Ronald. "Utopia: Space, Time, History." *Utopia: The Search for the Ideal Society in the Western World*. Eds. Roland Schaer, Gregory Claeys, and Lyman Tower Sargent. New York: The New York Public Library, 2000.
- Schmeling, Gareth L., ed. *The Novel in the Ancient World*. Leiden: Brill, 1996.
- Scobie, Alexander. *Aspects of the Ancient Romance and Its Heritage*. Meisenheim: Hain, 1969.
- Selden, Daniel L. "Genre of Genre." In Tatum. 39-64.
- Smith, Forrest S. *Secular and Sacred Visionaries in the Middle Ages*. New York: Garland, 1986.
- Stephens, Suzan A. and John Winkler. *Ancient Greek Novels. The Fragments: Introduction, Text, Translation and Commentary*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Who Read Ancient Novels?" In Tatum. 405-18.

- Stevens, Suzan A. and John J. Winkler, eds. *Ancient Greek Novels: The Fragments*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994.
- Tatum, James, ed. *In Search for the Ancient Novel*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994.
- Thomson, Oliver J. *History of Ancient Geography*. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1948.
- Touraine, Alain. "Society as Utopia." *Utopia: The Search for the Ideal Society in the Western World*. Eds. Roland Schaer, Gregory Claeys, and Lyman Tower Sargent. New York: The New York Public Library, 2000.
- Treadgold, Warren. *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.
- Trenker, Sophie. *The Greek Novella in the Classical Period*. Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1958.
- Vivas, Eliseo, and Murray Krieger, eds. *The Problem of Aesthetics: A Book of Readings*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1953.
- Wagner, Peter, ed. *Icons, Texts, Iconotexts: Essays on Ekphrasis and Intermediality*. New York: W. de Gruyter, 1996.
- Weimann, Robert. "History, Appropriation and the Uses of Representation in Modern Narrative." *The Aims of Representation: Subject, Text, History*. Ed. Murray Krieger. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987.
- Westrem, Scott D., ed. *Discovering New Worlds: Essays on Medieval Exploration and Imagination*. New York: Garland, 1991.
- Wilhelm, James J. *The Cruellest Month: Spring, Nature and Love in Classical and Medieval Lyrics*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965.
- Williams, George. H. *Wilderness and Paradise in Christian Thought*. New York: Harper, 1962.
- Winkler, John J. "The Invention of Romance." *The Search for the Ancient Novel*. Ed. James Tatum. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University press, 1994. 23-38.
- Winston, David. "'Iambulus' Island of the Sun and the Hellenistic Literary Utopias." *Science Fiction Studies* 3 (1976): 219-27.

Wiseman, T. P. and Christopher Gill. *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993.

Wittkower, Rudolf. "Marvels of the East: A Study in the History of Monsters." In *Allegory and the Migration of Symbols*. Ed. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1987.

Wolschke-Bulmahn, Joachim. "Study of Byzantine Gardens." *Jahrbuch der Osterreichischen Byzantinistik* 30 (1981): 171-205.

Zaleski, Carol Goldsmith. *Otherworld Journeys: Accounts of Near-Death Experiences In Medieval and Modern Times*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Zeitlin, Froma I. "Gardens of Desire in Longus's *Daphnis and Chloe*: Nature, Art, and Imitation." In Tatum. 148-72.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Artful Eye: Vision, Ecphrasis and Spectacle in Euripidean Theatre" in *Art and Text in ancient Greek Culture*. Goldhill, Simon and Robin Osborne, eds. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.