

Intercultural Encounters in the Late Byzantine Vernacular Romance

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In the Middle Ages as in ages before and after, the Mediterranean was the natural connector between the people and cultures around its shores, a great shared space in which a lively multicultural interchange of goods and luxury items took place. Due to historical contingencies, these contacts developed with variable intensity along maritime routes already established in antiquity. The frequency seems to have reached a peak in the tenth to fourteenth centuries.¹ The exchanged goods belonged, for the most part, to the realm of court cultures that extended far beyond the Mediterranean. Offered as gifts, captured as spoils or sold as trade goods, luxury objects travelled along pathways spanning Central and North Europe as well as Baghdad and even further Central Asia and China. This never-ending movement let a common visual language arise, which explains the similarities luxury objects often display, most notably regarding ornamental and iconographic features.² Artefacts and technology, however, were not the only goods that circulated across the Mediterranean: ports and market-places were transit points for cultural goods as well.³ In these and in similar contact zones,⁴ a lively exchange of ideas, narrative subjects, motifs and – more generally – knowledge developed beyond the great divides of language, ethnicity and religion.

Admittedly, this kind of mobility is far more difficult to identify, which partly explains (but does not justify) the lack of scholarly attention. To be sure, objects are concrete; they still exist and can therefore be touched with hands. The evidence they offer is tangible, whereas literary motifs are immaterial, unsteady entities. And yet, artefacts and narrative motifs,

¹ Cupane and Krönung 2016: 1–2. ² Hoffmann 2001: 16 and 26; see also Grabar 1997.

³ Schenda 1993: 71–82

⁴ The term ‘contact zones’ was first coined by Pratt 1991, in the context of the kind of hybrid culture that originated in colonized countries under the pressure of a hegemonic culture. It has recently been used to design urban spaces (such as museums or schools), where people with different language and cultural background come together (Schorch 2013).

whether written or oral, sometimes speak a similar language. What is more, visual culture often parallels the literary – whose reverse image it is – insofar as the literature stands behind the picture as its actual source of inspiration.⁵

In what follows, I will move from the assumption that a kind of reservoir of shared motifs freely circulating through time and space did exist during the Middle Ages,⁶ and that they built, together with a few founding texts – some adventure and love tales as the *Alexander Romance* and *Floire et Blancheflor* or, more often, novelistic and sapiencial literature like the books of *Kalila wa Dimna*, *Barlaam and Joasaph* and the *Sindibad* – a common narrative koine.⁷ Both motifs and texts were usually reshaped according to local tastes and expectations, but they maintained their basic features, thus remaining recognizable to the receivers and to us now as well. But, whereas the texts, translated and adapted, were consigned to writing – which makes their itinerary from East to West (or, less frequently West to East) easier to reconstruct – narrative motifs were most often carried through the lively voice of numerous unknown senders. Spread through underground, twisty paths, they flew back and forth, merged with other themes and were inserted in new narrative contexts. As with folk tales, literary motifs, too, can move easily over time and space, handed down orally, without leaving any traces of the intermediate stages. That is the reason why they are difficult to detect and are very often overlooked or at least underestimated.

Within the connecting Mediterranean space, Byzantium, if only on account of its geographical position, always held a very special position. Not only did it function as a contact point and hub for all kinds of luxury goods (many of which self-produced), being itself at the same time the longed-for destination of countless travellers, merchants, adventurers,⁸ it was also the distributor and, so to speak, recycler of exotic oriental narrative material forwarded to Western Europe. This is a strongly voiced opinion, and it is surely correct, but it is just one side of the coin, for literary transmission and reception are a two-way process: giver and receiver always interact with each other. To the steady stream of tales and motifs flowing westwards via Byzantium we have, therefore, to add the one flowing in the opposite direction.

⁵ Walker 2011: 59–66. ⁶ On this, see Yiavis 2014: 41.

⁷ The Iranologist Angelo Piemontese called these founding texts ‘the shared library of the Middle Ages’ (1999: 1–5).

⁸ An overview on this topic covering the tenth to thirteenth centuries can be found in Ciggaar 1996.

In late Byzantium, the road from West to East was extremely well frequented. This change of direction has to be related to the severe disruption of the balance of power among the different political players acting within the Mediterranean space from the thirteenth century onwards. Against the increasing political and economic role of various western potentates, first of all the Italian sea republics, Byzantium became more and more a junior partner whose very existence depended on western support.⁹ It is certainly no coincidence that the number of marriage connections between Byzantium and the West greatly increased from the mid-twelfth century onwards.¹⁰ Western princesses with their retinue shaped the atmosphere at the imperial court. Westerners settled with increasing frequency in Byzantium, and flooded the empire with arms and merchandise as well as books and tales.¹¹ Some of the books, such as the theological works of Thomas Aquinas and Augustine, or Ovid's poetic oeuvre, must have circulated in thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Constantinople, where they were translated into the learned language of the Byzantine scholars who constituted their intended audience.¹² The milieu and aims of such translations are also well known, although it is hardly possible to identify either the specific manuscripts they are based on or the actual channels through which they were brought to Constantinople.

Greek Vernacular Narrative between Popular Tradition and Literary Exchange

By contrast, vernacular translations or, better, adaptations are a problem of their own. In most cases, we can only guess when and where the contact came about and who the audience was. I will not dwell on this topic; suffice it to say here that adaptations of foreign novels are generally thought to have been composed in no longer Byzantine areas such as Frankish Morea, Crete or Cyprus, and consequently they would have minor relevance for Byzantine literature proper. However, a reappraisal of the adapted romances is underway, with a new awareness of their cultural significance and relevance to Byzantine and early modern Greek

⁹ Cupane and Krönung 2016: 11.

¹⁰ On the topic, with focus on the Palaiologan epoch, see Origone 1996.

¹¹ On the Latin quarters in Constantinople, see Schreiner 1995 and 1997.

¹² An overview of the translations of Latin literature into Greek is Schmitt 1968 on Planudes's translation activity; on Ovid translations especially, see Fisher 2002–3; on Augustine, see Fisher 2011 and Maltese 2004; on Thomas Aquinas, see Plested 2012: 63–73.

literature. The anonymous adapters seem to have chosen very popular and widespread tales originally written in French or Italian, which they freely and creatively rewrote in their familiar Greek vernacular by enriching them with motifs taken from the native oral tradition and from other literary genres. As Kostas Yiavis puts it, the adapted romances – such as the *War of Troy*, *Florios and Platziaflora*, *Imperios and Margarona*, *Apollonios of Tyre*, the *Old Knight* and the *Teseida* – ‘were the main gateways for engaging with rich foreign traditions’.¹³

Of course, adaptations from western sources are not all that vernacular fiction has to offer. The so-called ‘original’ romances were most probably produced by educated authors in the Constantinopolitan court milieu towards the end of the thirteenth and in the fourteenth century. Although they are sometimes seen as purely Byzantine creations which can be explained by traditional literary categories,¹⁴ they did certainly not remain unaffected by the increased inflow of tales and texts from abroad. On the contrary, works such as *Livistros and Rhodamme*, *Velthandros and Chrysantza* and *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* make extensive use of themes and images drawn from medieval French love allegory, first and foremost the idea of the judgement at the court of the ruler Eros, which they ‘translate’ into the iconographic language of imperial rhetoric.¹⁵ That said, the most important influences certainly came from within, from the learned literary tradition. It is Herbert Hunger and, in more recent times, Panagiotis Agapitos who have mapped out the strong lines of continuity from the learned novel to the vernacular romances, and, more generally the impact of rhetorical training, as well as of Byzantine court realities on the latter, thus regaining them for Byzantine literature.¹⁶

In addition to the interplay between Byzantine and western literary culture, the influence of the Byzantine oral narrative tradition also has to be taken into account. Indeed, popular narrative, after having been systematically removed and silenced by the learned tradition, slowly began to find its voice from the twelfth century onward through the new linguistic medium of the vernacular. It makes its first appearance as an elusive

¹³ See the persuasive plea of Yiavis 2016: 127.

¹⁴ See the paradigmatic statement of Odorico 2005: 284 (my trans.): ‘Byzantine romances of this period [i.e. the Palaiologan period] should be considered exclusively within the frame of Byzantium’s own literature and society without falling back upon western influences which, if any, are surely not as strong as their own social and literary tradition.’

¹⁵ I have already discussed this in details elsewhere; see e.g. Cupane 1973/4: 286–96 and Cupane 1992: 291–305.

¹⁶ Hunger 1968; Agapitos 1990, 1991: 142–3, 205–13 and 323–7; Agapitos 2013: 399–416; see also Beck 1971: 117–35.

shadow in the vernacular romances, and earlier scholars used it as a strong point for considering these works as pieces of unsophisticated, inferior literature spontaneously originating among the common people.¹⁷ I will return to this in more detail below, but it is useful to make some preliminary considerations from the outset. Whereas the role of traditional Byzantine rhetorical schooling is palpable everywhere in the romances and can be clearly identified, the impact of a popular (and by definition oral) narrative tradition is more difficult to assess and even to define. The presence of fairy-tale material is noticeable everywhere; it can even be said to shape the characteristic atmosphere of the vernacular romances. But the existence of a rich stock of folk tales collected from mid-nineteenth century onwards¹⁸ does not automatically allow us to infer that these tales already existed in the form they have today at the time of composition of the romances. In some cases the reverse situation seems to be equally possible, and even more probable.¹⁹ Be that as it may, literary influences from within – and, I would add, abroad – were, in my opinion, stronger and more effective in the composition of vernacular romances than native folklore.

Having already questioned the ‘Byzantinocentric’ approach in the past,²⁰ I would like to provide here further arguments and make my point clearer by comparing two Byzantine vernacular romances with an old French tale. The texts in question have been chosen because of the common features they share. Despite their anonymity, all three works surely originated in a courtly milieu and were addressed to a courtly audience. The authors were undoubtedly men of letters, well aware of the learned culture of their time. Likewise, they were also acquainted with their own folkloric tradition. Furthermore, they also share some plot motifs suggesting direct contact. However, my aim is not so much to demonstrate the dependence of the later texts on the earlier ones, but rather to shed more light on the multiple ways in which reception functioned at the time and the subtle patterns it could display, beyond the obvious case of a recognized archetype.

My Byzantine texts are the tales of *Livistros and Rhodamne* and *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe*. The western text is the romance of *Partonopeu de Blois*, which I shall also take as a point of departure for my discussion. Since *Partonopeu* is not very well known among Byzantinists, I will start

¹⁷ See the overview of the scholarly research on this topic in Agapitos 1991: 7–14.

¹⁸ On nature and typology of Modern Greek folk tales, see Meraklis 1993; see also Megas 1967a.

¹⁹ See, for instance, the brilliant article by Reinsch 1986. ²⁰ See above n. 15.

with an introduction of this text and a summary of its plot,²¹ before I move on to my comparative study.

Partonopeu de Blois

Little known today, probably as a result of the overwhelming celebrity of the great contemporary works of Chrétien de Troyes, *Partonopeu* was surely one of the most popular romances in the Middle Ages and for a long time after. It enjoyed great diffusion and was translated into several medieval vernaculars.²² The anonymous author was active at the court of Blois and dedicated his work to a prince of this house (closely connected to the French royal house), most probably Count Thibaut V, whose wife Alix was a daughter of Eleanor of Aquitaine and Louis VII of France.

The romance survives in seven complete manuscripts, three fragments and a number of extracts, probably from three more lost manuscripts, incorporated into two later texts. The story also exists in three different versions with two different final sequences, a short one (**A**) leading to a triple wedding and a long one (**V**) with a single wedding of the protagonist couple. **A** may well have been the earlier and original version. **V** was later extended and provided with a continuation (**B/T**) in which the hero had to face further hostilities from the rival he had already defeated and then killed in the first version. The possibility that part of this sequel might stem from the author himself or at least have been planned by him cannot be ruled out, for it is hinted at in the course of the main story.²³ Be that as it may, the continuation seems to be a composite product, written over time by many different authors. As for the chronology of the first version, it has been convincingly argued for a dating to the early 1170s.²⁴ *Partonopeu* would also precede *Cligès* (1176/7), thus introducing, along with *Eracle* by Gautier d'Arras, the fashion of the so-called Byzantine romances, and more generally, that 'vogue de l'orient' which would spread throughout Europe in the following decades.²⁵

²¹ In what follows I rely on Eley 2011: 1–19 and 218–28 (detailed summary).

²² Adaptations are known in Middle Dutch, Middle High German, Middle English, Old Norse (Danish and Icelandic), Italian as well as Spanish and Catalan (both very late adaptations). On the particular features in some adaptations of the romance in various European languages, see Hanley, Longtin and Eley 2004; on the Icelandic versions, see particularly Rikhardsdóttir 2012: 113–63.

²³ See below, n. 95. ²⁴ Eley and Simons 1999.

²⁵ See on this topic Gaullier-Bougassas 2003; with specific reference to *Partonopeu*, Bercovici-Huard 1982: 180–5; Gaullier-Bougassas 1999.

Partonopeu's plot runs as follows. While hunting in the Ardennes forest, Partonopeu, the 13-year-old nephew of the French king, loses contact with his comrades, gets lost in the wilderness and, having spent an awful night in the woods, arrives at the seashore where a lavish unmanned ship lies at anchor. The ship transports him to a magnificent, yet apparently deserted city – the detailed description of which is clearly modelled on contemporary travellers' accounts of the wealth and treasures of Constantinople (most notably that by Odo of Deuil).²⁶ Fearing demonic forces, the hero seeks shelter in the city's finest palace. Inside, he is served dinner by invisible hands, then goes to the bedchamber and settles down for the night. Suddenly, an unknown woman gets into bed beside him and declares him an intruder, prompting him to depart immediately. Partonopeu refuses to go and pleads for mercy. In the darkness, the two young people soon come closer to each other and begin to explore each other's bodies. What follows has been described as one of the most erotically charged lovemaking scenes in medieval literature. The woman then reveals herself as Melior, the learned empress of Byzantium who is also a skilful magician. She declares to have chosen Partonopeu from among many because of his noble origins and beauty. Hence, she had deliberately lured him and brought him to her city, Chief d'Oire, by her magic skills in order to marry him. The wedding, however, will not be celebrated for two and a half years, until Partonopeu reaches the age to be knighted, at the time her vassals have appointed. In the meantime, he will enjoy Melior's love at night, but will not be allowed to see her. The days he will spend in royal style, by hunting and sightseeing, without being seen by or seeing anyone, in order to protect her honour. Otherwise, the magical skills she painstakingly learned would vanish forever.

After some time, Partonopeu gets homesick and visits Blois, where his mother, informed about his love story and its circumstances, urges him instead to make a suitable marriage, warning him against Melior, whom she declares to be a demon force. Back at Chief d'Oire, his curiosity about his beloved's appearance leads him to betray his promise. As a result, Melior loses her magic powers and Partonopeu is banished. In despair, the young man seeks death in the Ardennes forest, where Melior's sister Urrique discovers him and takes him with her to her estate of Salence, close to Chef d'Oire, falsely pretending that Melior has sent her to find

²⁶ Odo of Deuil, 62–6; on the impact of Constantinople's overwhelming wealth on the western crusaders, see Ciggaar 1996: 45–77; Macrides 2002; particularly on descriptions of the imperial palaces, see Schreiner 2006.

him. She nurses Partonopeu back to health and provides him with fine armour in order to have him take part in the great three-day tournament arranged by Melior's barons to choose her husband. Together with his loyal friend Gaudin, whom he met in the forest on the way to Chief d'Oire, Partonopeu proves to be the best warrior by prevailing against all opponents, and particularly against the most frightening Persian sultan Margaris, whom he finally kills in single combat.

In what was probably the original (and shorter) version, the story (as it appears in **A**) closes with a long final sequence featuring a triple marriage (Partonopeu with Melior; Melior's sister Urraque with the French king, Lohier; and Gaudin with her lady-in-waiting, Persewis), followed by the coronation of the main bridal pair. In the long version, only the wedding of the protagonist pair is featured, while Partonopeu's final duel with the sultan and the death of the latter by his hand is missing. Instead, the narrator comes to the fore in a first epilogue, lamenting his lack of success in love and offering to continue the stories of Partonopeu's squire, Anselot, as well as of the sultan and of Gaudin, if his lady so desires, which she does. Thereafter, some of these threads are developed, beginning with Anselot's (love) story (in first person), followed by the revenge campaign of the conveniently resuscitated sultan. The continuation concludes with a second epilogue, in which the narrator praises his beloved's beauty and virtue and names her with the *senhal* (sobriquet) *Passe-Rose* (hollyhock), according to the conventions of troubadour lyric.²⁷ The main features of the continuation in terms of style are the change of metre (from the common octosyllabic couplets to two long sequences in alexandrines and decasyllables respectively) and the partial shift to first-person narration.

The key principle followed by the *Partonopeu* poet has been aptly defined as fusion,²⁸ the creative rewriting and blending of two major currents that dominated vernacular fiction in the late 1160s: narratives based on (written) classical (Apuleius) and medieval sources (such as the *romans d'antiquité*)²⁹ with their long descriptions of artefacts, cities and combat scenes, and stories deriving from Celtic and more generally folkloric (oral) sources (such as Marie de France's *lais*), focusing on

²⁷ On the name *Passe Rose* and on the possibility that the poet's patroness, Marguerite de Blois, may hide behind this sobriquet, see Eley 2011: 192–205.

²⁸ Bruckner 1993a: 109; already Fourier 1960: 440–41 had called Partonopeu 'a kind of summa of twelfth-century writing'.

²⁹ This concerns primarily the trias *Roman de Thèbes*, *Roman d'Eneas*, *Roman de Troye*, on which see, among many, Schöning 1991 and Mora-Lebrun 2008.

magic and the marvellous.³⁰ Along with these ingredients, *Partonopeu* is also enriched by borrowings from troubadour poetry as well as from genealogical chronicles. As for the first, they are recognizable above all in the decidedly lyrical stance the narrator adopts. In fact, he often interferes in the love story he narrates with pseudo-biographical first-person asides, in which he compares his own unhappy unrequited love to those of his characters, thereby playing the role of the unhappy suitor so typical of troubadour lyric.³¹ The genealogical intent, on the other hand, is clearly expressed from the very beginning in the prologue where the hero's ancestry, and hence the Capetians' lineage, is traced back to the Trojan king Priam. In this way *Partonopeu* constructs a kind of alternative draft to Wace's *Roman de Brut*, where the Plantagenet family, a rival of the French royal house, is credited with Trojan origins.³² It has been suggested that the romance aimed at enhancing the nobility of the French royal house and, at the same time, reflecting the counts of Blois' friendly relations with Byzantium through the ideal of a Byzantine–Western alliance peacefully achieved by way of marriage.³³

In other words, the tale of *Partonopeu* can be seen as a prime example of what Douglas Kelly has aptly called the 'Conspiracy of Allusion', referring to the multiple medieval practices of rewriting, the blending of different genres to form a new hybrid creation and, more generally, the intrinsic intertextuality of medieval writings.³⁴ But what are we to do with such a dazzling mixture of heterogeneous narrative motifs? Is there anything that could be meaningfully compared with Byzantine narratives? I believe so, and I will begin with a comparison between *Partonopeu* and *Kallimachos and Chryssorrhoe*.

***Partonopeu de Blois – Kallimachos and Chryssorrhoe:* a Comparative Study**

Kallimachos and Chryssorrhoe was probably composed at the very beginning of the fourteenth century in Constantinople. It may be the work of

³⁰ Bruckner 1993a: 110–15. On the chronology of Marie's *Lais*, see Short 2007: 326–38, esp. 337; on the relationship of *Partonopeu* and *Lais*, see also Eley 2011: 12–13.

³¹ Walters 1992 and Gingras 2004: 140–1.

³² Simons and Eley 1995: 7–14; Eley 2011: 50–9; Bruckner 1993b; Gingras 2004: 136–8. On the prologue's sources, see Fourrier 1960: 392–411.

³³ Gaullier-Bougassas 1999: 52–4. On the potential relation between *Partonopeu de Blois* and the Byzantine twelfth-century novel, see Söderblom Saarela 2016 and 2017.

³⁴ Kelly 1999.

Andronikos Komnenos Palaiologos, a cousin of the ruling emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos (1282–1328).³⁵ The story runs as follows. An unnamed king of an unnamed kingdom sends his three sons out into the world on a quest in order to prove themselves worthy of succession by their bravery. The youngest, Kallimachos, proves to be the most reckless of the three, and is the only one who dares to enter the Dragon's castle, a forbidding fortress guarded by frightening snakes. There, he kills the monster, frees a princess held captive in the fortress, and falls in love with her. Sometime later, the princess is abducted by a suitor with the help of a witch and by means of a magic apple. Kallimachos sets out to search for his beloved, enters his rival's castle disguised as a gardener, and reveals himself to her by attaching the ring he had received from her to a branch of a tree. Eventually, the lovers are reunited and come back to the disenchanted castle where they first enjoyed love's delight.

Scholars have long recognized the intimate ties connecting *Kallimachos* with the world of the fairy tale. In fact, just as in *Partonopeu*, fairy-tale elements shape the atmosphere of the romance, lending it a distinct tone, however without making it a naive literary product. Despite all the differences in content and tone, both romances share some common elements, the most conspicuous being the narrative sequence centred on the visit to the lonely castle. It therefore deserves a closer look.

In both *Partonopeu* and *Kallimachos* the heroes undergo a very similar experience: they have to face the marvellous in the form of a wondrous castle (a whole city with many palaces in *Partonopeu*) where they both experience sexual fulfilment. In both cases the castle bears the features of marvellous spaces, dominated by magic and secluded from the real world the heroes belong to. The boundaries between the two realms are marked by dangerous liminal spaces, the sea and a towering mountain respectively. The main impression of both castles is that of overwhelming brightness³⁶ due to the wall's amazing cladding: white and red marble in *Partonopeu*,³⁷ gold leaf and precious stones in *Kallimachos*.³⁸ The castle/city walls are

³⁵ All necessary information on the romance is to be found in Cupane 2016a: 95–97 and 114–18.

³⁶ *Partonopeu de Blois* 787–8 (Collet and Jorris): 'Et voit les murs de la cité | qui contre ciel donent clarté'; cf. 766–8: 'li enfes voit molt grans clartés; | et quant la nuis est plus obscure | de tant est la clartés plus pure' = *Kallimachos* 179–80 (Cupane): καὶ τοῦ χρυσοῦ τὸ καθαρόν, τὸ στίλβον τὸ τοῦ κάλλους | ἐνίκα πάσας ἐκ παντός ἡλιακᾶς ἀκτίνας ('the shine of gold, its wonderful glittering wholly superseded the sun's rays').

³⁷ *Partonopeu de Blois* 791–94 (Collet and Jorris): 'Blans est li marbres dont ils sont | et vermel aval et amont, | tot a eschiekier par quareaus | est tot li mur trosque et creteaus.'

³⁸ *Kallimachos* 178–83 (Cupane): Τὸ τεῖχος ἦτον ὑψηλόν, ὀλόχρυσον ἀπέξω, | ... | τὸ δέ γε σφυρηλάτημα τῶν ἀροπυργωμάτων | ἀπὸ συμμίκτου καὶ χρυσοῦ καὶ λίθων καὶ μαργάρων

guarded by live serpents and dragons in *Kallimachos*,³⁹ crowned with zoomorphic sculptures (lions, eagles, dragons) in *Partonopeu*.⁴⁰ Here other lavishly decorated buildings are also to be found, among them one with gilded front-reliefs representing the celestial bodies, the four elements and the calendar, as well as the wars and the heroic deeds of the old times.⁴¹ Such similarities are, of course, not specific and therefore not indicative. Educated as they were, both authors drew from their respective literary traditions. The *Partonopeu* poet most probably modelled his description on the Carthage and Babylon ekphrasis in the *Roman d'Eneas* (407–70; 497–539) and in *Floire et Blancheflor* (1748–1952) respectively, both of which focused on the architectural structure of the city complex more than on the interior decoration. The author of *Kallimachos*, on the other hand, concentrates more on ornamental aspects of the interior decoration of special buildings (as the bathhouse in 291–354), thereby mirroring Byzantine palatial architecture, certainly reminiscent of the analogous description in *Velthandros and Chrysantza*.⁴² Nevertheless, the overall narrative situation is indeed comparable, all the more so when one proceeds to the next narrative sequence.

Once inside, both *Partonopeu* and *Kallimachos* stand, as the poets explicitly state, in a deserted awe-inspiring space, absolutely devoid of people.⁴³ As a result, their reactions are ambivalent, oscillating between amazement and fear, delight and malaise. This ambivalence is indicated through the use of appropriate terminology, mainly of keywords such as the substantives ἀπορία, ζάλη, σύγχυσις (perplexity, distress, confusion) or the verbs φοβοῦμαι, τρέμω, ἔξαπορῶ (to be frightened, to tremble, to

(‘the wall was very high and entirely laminated in gold | . . . | the top of the battlements was clad in gold mixed with pearls and gem’).

³⁹ *Kallimachos* 189–92 (Cupane): καὶ ζῶντες ὄφεις εἰς αὐτὰς τὰς κεκλεισμένους πύλας | ὄφεις μεγάλοι, φοβεροὶ καὶ θῆρες παρὰ φύσιν | ἄγρυπνοὶ φύλακες ὄξεις τοῦ τηλικούτου κάστρου | ὀρῶσι, δράκοντες φρικτοὶ καὶ πυλωροὶ θηρία (‘live serpents, supernatural beasts, huge and frightening rushed against the sealed gates. Awesome dragons, beasts, were the wakeful and sharp warder of such a castle’).

⁴⁰ *Partonopeu de Blois* 841–4 (Collet and Jorris): ‘sor les pumeaus sont li lion | et li aiglet et li dragon, | et ymages d’autre figure | qui samblent vives par nature, | toutes couvertes de fin or.’

⁴¹ *Partonopeu de Blois* 852–8 (Collet and Jorris). In *Kallimachos* 415–37, a similar iconography is to be found on the vaulted dome of the bedchamber.

⁴² On this see Cupane 2015: 107–18

⁴³ e.g. *Kallimachos* 351 (Cupane): ἀνθρώπων μὲν οὐκ εἶδεν (no human being to see); 366: οὐκ ἦν ἀνθρώπου φύσις (not a living soul); 408: πολλὴ γὰρ ἦν ἡ μόνωσις τοῦ παραξένου τόπου (‘great was the loneliness of the wondrous place’) = *Partonopeu de Blois* 774 (Collet and Jorris): ‘Partonopeus n’i voit rien vive’; 971: ‘mais n’i voit nule rien vivant.’

be troubled).⁴⁴ Moreover, both heroes feel themselves confronted with supernatural powers, which only increases their fear.⁴⁵ Heroes of adventure romance as they are, both Kallimachos and Partonopeu overcome their fear, enter the palace, and find a dining room where there are huge tables, heavily laden with golden dishes and goblets, cups made out of precious stones as well as plenty of exquisite food and drink.⁴⁶ The two of them do not abstain from eating and drinking, but whereas Partonopeu enjoys the culinary delicacies served by invisible hands,⁴⁷ Kallimachos only nibbles at the food, hardly bearing the building's wondrous loneliness (390).⁴⁸ The next step leads the heroes in the most secluded room of the palace, the owner's bed chamber, where they both encounter their prospective beloved.⁴⁹

Unlike the descriptive similarities mentioned above, the number and quality of the shared elements in this case are sufficient to make us believe that the poet of *Kallimachos* would have been acquainted with the popular tale of *Partonopeu* – if not with a written version, at least orally. Here he found yet another modulation of the wondrous castle motif that was already known to him from the earlier Byzantine romances, *Livistros and Rhodamne* and *Velthandros and Chrysantza*,⁵⁰ and borrowed it, at the same time refashioning the story to make it fit into his own narrative concept.

However, once the heroes cross the threshold of the private space and the heroine enters the stage the two romances part ways and tell different stories – the Byzantine story offering, so to speak, the reverse of the French. Whereas Partonopeu never sees (more than that, is forbidden

⁴⁴ See e.g. *Kallimachos* 345 (Cupane): ἀπορών (being puzzled), 195: ἐξεπλάγησαν, ἐθαύμασαν (they were appalled, they wondered), 209: ἐξεθαμβήθησαν (they were amazed), 369–70: ζάλην (distress), σύγχυσιν (confusion), ταραχήν (trouble), 390: θορυβισμένος (troubled), 411: ἀγανακτῶν, φροντίζων (being vexed, being anxious) corresponding to the substantives 'measle, dolor, paor' or the verbs 's'espert, merveiller, esbahir, s'esmaier' in *Partonopeu de Blois* 807–15; 873–80; 897; 905–10 (Collet and Jorris). On the imagery of astonishment and wonder in the Palaiologan romances, see Cupane 2014: 194–5; for a different approach, see Agapitos 2004: 40–5.

⁴⁵ See e.g. *Kallimachos* 386–7 (Cupane): φοβοῦμαι τὰ παράδοξα καὶ παρὰ φύσιν ταῦτα | μήπως καὶ τίποτε κακὸν ἔχουσι κεκρυμμένον ('I fear all these supernatural and wondrous things | for they may be fraught with hidden dangers') = *Partonopeu de Blois* 808 (Collet and Jorris): 'cuide que soit faerie'; 880: 'a por fantosme tot tenu'; 906: 'cuide molt estre engenies'; 1050–1: 'crient molt que diables li aient fait cest bel samblant.'

⁴⁶ This motif occurs in both folk tales and medieval romances; see Bozóký 1974: 349–52; see also below.

⁴⁷ The whole passage covers 921–1053 (Collet and Jorris).

⁴⁸ The whole passage covers 355–410 (Cupane).

⁴⁹ *Partonopeu de Blois* 1121–1316 (Collet and Jorris) = *Kallimachos* 415–765 (Cupane).

⁵⁰ On the castle as the new setting of late Byzantine vernacular romances, see Cupane 2014: 190–5; Cupane, 2016: 98–101 and 114–15 (on *Kallimachos* in particular).

to see) his beloved,⁵¹ Kallimachos faces from the outset his mistress-to-be, hanging naked by the hair in the dazzling light of the dragon's golden chamber.⁵² Partonopeu's plot follows – with reversed gender roles – the outline of the tale of Cupid and Psyche as narrated in Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*.⁵³ This means that the erotic experience of the protagonists unfolds in complete darkness – only after the breaking of the prohibition does the overwhelming beauty of Cupid's naked body appear. In both Apuleius and *Partonopeu*, the invisibility of the erotic body – male and female respectively – effectively contrasts the vivid representation of the erotic play.⁵⁴ Regardless of whether the French poet took the lovely story from the short summary enclosed in the mythological compendium of the fifth-century mythographer Planciadis Fulgentius or perhaps was acquainted with Apuleius's work itself,⁵⁵ the gender reversal and the consequent rearrangement of the balance of power between the sexes was no doubt a major departure from the story he had received. It is an impressive witness of the poet's originality and the fusion that he operated between the classical plot and the different Celtic folk tales in which the secret love of a mighty fairy-mistress for a young and poor man was narrated.⁵⁶

The poet of *Kallimachos*, on the contrary, describes more than one sexual encounter, all of them taking place in full light, further enhanced by the shining of gold and precious stones. Even the only nocturnal encounter of the heroes is told to be 'enlightened by the glim of the daily lovemaking'.⁵⁷ The sexual details emphatically underscored in *Partonopeu* are passed over in silence⁵⁸ or discretely alluded to.⁵⁹ By contrast, the female erotic body is openly disclosed in all its glorious nakedness.

⁵¹ *Partonopeu de Blois* 1441–4 (Collet and Jorris). ⁵² *Kallimachos* 449–69 (Cupane).

⁵³ Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 4, 28–6, 24.

⁵⁴ The nightly lovemaking of the protagonists in the darkness is deemed to be the most realistic description of sexual seduction that medieval literature has to offer; see Eley 2011: 24: 'an almost pornographic bedroom scene'.

⁵⁵ On the possible dependence of *Partonopeu* from Fulgentius (*Mythologiae* III 6), see Brown 1964: 199–203; on Fulgentius's allegorical reading of Apuleius, see Haig Gaisser 2008: 53–9.

⁵⁶ As, for instance, those that underlie the *Lais* by Marie de France; see on this topic Eley 2011: 27–9; on the common motif stock shared by both *Partonopeu* and the *Lais*, see Newstead 1946.

⁵⁷ *Kallimachos and Chrysoirhoe* 1934 (Cupane): ἦλθεν ἡ νύξ μετὰ φωτὸς ἡμερινῶν ἐρώτων.

⁵⁸ See e.g. the aposiopesis in *Kallimachos* 756 (Cupane): τὰ δὲ ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ καιροῦ κατὰ λεπτόν οὐ γράφω ('I will not tell in detail what happened in the meantime') that abruptly cuts off the narration of the first sexual encounter of the two protagonists: 754–5 ἦλθον εἰς ἄλλους λόγους, | εἰς γλυκωτέρους καὶ καλοῦς ὡσάν μαλακωτέρους ('they came to different words, to more sweet, cosy and tender ones').

⁵⁹ e.g. 768–9 (Cupane): μετὰ γοῦν ἄλλα τὰ πολλὰ τῶν ἐρωτοχαρίτων, | ὅσα μαθάνει φυσικὰ ἐρωτικῆ καρδία ('after the other joys of love that every loving heart naturally learns').

This is a scene of great visual impact, which may well be built on literary or pictorial representations of Andromeda. The tale was very well known among Byzantine scholars and educated people, not only from the short summary enclosed in Apollodorus's *Bibliotheca*⁶⁰ or from the flowery ekphrasis of a painting in the novel *Leucippe and Clitophon* by Achilles Tatius,⁶¹ but also from the scholia on Lycophron's *Alexandra* by John Tzetzes.⁶² Furthermore, the *Parastaseis Syntomoi Chronikai* (eighth/ninth century) report that a sculptural group representing Perseus and Andromeda once stood in the bath of Konstantiana (or Konstantiniana).⁶³ Since that monument would have been long gone by the fourteenth century, a literary suggestion seems more probable. The author of *Kallimachos* may well have been acquainted with the *Parastaseis* although the very succinct, dry report they offer (the same also applies to the texts by Apollodorus and Tzetzes) can hardly have inspired the sensual, flowery depiction in our romance, pointing to a more literary elaboration of the myth.

Such a source was easily available for a learned author of a solid educational background as the author of *Kallimachos*, whether he is identical with Andronikos Komnenos Palaiologos or not. In addition to his obvious knowledge of the contemporary romances and ancient novels, he also seems to have been well acquainted with the huge bulk of Hellenistic epigrammatic literature usually called *Anthologia Palatina*, re-edited by Maximus Planudes at the end of the thirteenth century and thus brought back to the attention of students and scholars. As has been convincingly argued, the sensual bath scenes in *Kallimachos* are deeply indebted to a set of epigrams on this topic included in Book VI of the *Palatina*.⁶⁴ This was not the only Planudean work exploited by the author of *Kallimachos*. Ancient mythology was obviously a core theme of Planudes's literary interest, due most probably to his teaching activity. It is therefore no coincidence that he did not refrain from taking into account also the Latin interpretation of the Greek myths as represented in Ovid's famous mythological 'handbook', the *Metamorphoses*, which Planudes translated together with Ovid's erotic works: *Heroides*, *Ars amatoria* and *Remedia amoris*. In Book IV of the *Metamorphoses*, one of the most vivid images of Andromeda chained naked to a rock is to be found.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 2.4, 3–4. ⁶¹ Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe and Clitophon* 3.7.

⁶² *Scholia ad Lycophronis Alexandram* 838–42 (Scheer).

⁶³ See *Parastaseis*, cap. 85 (pp. 71–2 in Cameron and Herrin 1984); see the related commentary in Berger 1988: 371–3.

⁶⁴ Agapitos 1990. ⁶⁵ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 4.670–83.

The overall situation in the Perseus and Andromeda tale is, in fact, very similar to the corresponding scene in the romance. In both, a naked maid is bound and exposed to a monster – in Ovid/Planudes it is a sea monster (κῆτος),⁶⁶ in Kallimachos a δράκων⁶⁷ – and both the rescuers stand speechless looking at the wonderful girl they first, incapable to act, believe to be a work of art.⁶⁸ Ovid even remarks humorously that Perseus, struck by Eros's arrow, almost forgets to flap his wings.⁶⁹

The intertextual congruence is such that a direct relationship between *Kallimachos* and the Planudean version of the Andromeda's story can safely be assumed. Once again, the author of *Kallimachos* proves to be as eclectic in choosing, reusing and combining his sources of inspiration as was his French peer. His narrative technique can be described in the exact same words that Penny Eley used to define the narrative concept of *Partonopeu*:

The poet set out to bring entire narrative paradigms into alignment and fuse them together . . . His models are blended in such a way that it is impossible to say either 'This is narrative model X with an admixture of model Y' or 'This is narrative model Y with an admixture of model X' . . . Fusion produces narrative Z, which is recognizably both X and Y, but also something quite different from either of them.⁷⁰

Greek learned novels and vernacular romances, ancient epigrammatic poetry, Ovidian mythological stories and, last but not least, French chivalric tales – all of them were equally important ingredients of the *Kallimachos* romance recipe.

An Elusive Partner: the International Folk Tale

As we have seen above, both *Partonopeu* and *Kallimachos* incorporated several fairy-tale motifs in their narrations. The first has the plot start with

⁶⁶ However, the more popular tradition as documented in the *Parastaseis* already calls the monster δράκων, see cap. 85, l. 4: τῷ ἐκέϊσε ἐμφωλεύντι δράκοντι.

⁶⁷ *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* 502, 515, 521ff. (Cupane).

⁶⁸ *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* 461 (Cupane): εἶναι καὶ ταύτην ἔλεγεν ἐκ τῶν ζωγραφημάτων ('he believed that she, too, was a painting') = *Metamorphoses* 4.675: *marmoreum ratus esset opus*. Admittedly, already Achilles Tatius 3.7.2 had Andromeda compared with a work of art: ἔοικε τὸ θέαμα, εἰ μὲν εἰς τὸ κάλλος ἀπίδοις, ἀγάλματι καινῷ, however, without saying anything about the impact the view of the beautiful girl in distress had on the hero.

⁶⁹ Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 4.677: *paene suas quater est oblitus in aere pennas* = Planudes, *Ovid Metamorphoses* 4.873–4 (Papathomopoulos and Tsabare): καὶ μικροῦ τὰς ἑαυτοῦ πτέρυγας ἐν ἀέρι κινεῖν ἐπελάθετο.

⁷⁰ Eley 2011: 7 and 8.

the motif of the wondrous hunt (the hero chases an enchanted animal which leads him into the otherworldly realm of wonder)⁷¹ and goes on to reshape what has been called 'our earliest evidence for one vast complex of tales about animal grooms',⁷² i.e. the famous Apuleian story of Cupid and Psyche with reversed gender roles. However, the 'written' tale of Cupid and Psyche may draw upon an old narrative tradition of 'told' tales, which the author himself seems to suggest by presenting the story as an oral tale recounted by an old woman.⁷³ Indeed, a very similar narrative structure underlies countless orally transmitted folk stories, spread all over the world, belonging to the type conventionally called the *disenchanted husband*.⁷⁴ It is also highly probable that there is some kind of relationship between such a fairy-tale type and the literary version by Apuleius. To be sure, the way in which they are related is not clear, and scholarly opinions on the subject vary widely, ranging from the suggestion of a purely literary creation by Apuleius himself to that of a long oral tradition of which Apuleius would be the first written evidence.⁷⁵

Be that as it may, one can safely assume that there were orally transmitted fairy/folk tales spread over the world, of which mythological narratives handed down in literary sources are simply special adaptations, related to particular places and/or historical (or mythical) famous persons. Such tales were not recorded in written form because of the low esteem they enjoyed among literate authors.⁷⁶ Once committed to writing, the tales led a, double life, so to speak, both in oral (popular) and written (literary) form and reached in that way the Middle Ages. Although medieval (Christian) learned culture was to a high degree repressive of oral culture, the boundaries between learned and popular culture were highly porous. In the western Middle Ages, by the time when many vernacular languages made the leap from orality to literacy (from the eleventh/twelfth century onwards), an openness to folk literature developed among clerics. A lively exchange that was unprecedented in scope can be ascertained.⁷⁷

⁷¹ The motif is exhaustively analysed by Donà 2003: 470–5 (on *Partonopeu* and related literary and folk tales).

⁷² Ziolkowski 2007: 209.

⁷³ See on this Ziolkowski 2007: 36–8 and 57–8, as well as Ziolkowski 2002.

⁷⁴ It is type ATU 425B, itself a subtype of ATU 425 (*The Search for the Lost Husband*) in the classification of Uther 2004: 247–56.

⁷⁵ See Fehling 1977 and Swahn 1955 respectively. A useful overview can be found in Hansen 2002: 12–19 and 100–14, who supports the priority of the oral narrative. On the Greek origin of the folk tale, see Megas 1967b.

⁷⁶ See Hansen 2002: 12–19. On the relationship between mythos and folk tale, see also the well-balanced overview by Röhrich 1984.

⁷⁷ On this issue Ziolkowski 2007: 40–3; see also Varvaro 1994: 14–19 and 198–213; Schmitt 1981.

For a learned author, as the anonymous poet of *Partonopeu* certainly was, the recourse to both the oral and the literary tradition was possible, and he certainly made use of both. Modern research can hardly disentangle such a multifaceted patchwork of sources. In suggesting that the narrative sequence of *Partonopeu* that I analysed above may go back directly to the Apuleian tale, I am well aware that traditional oral stories are by no means to be ruled out. Rather, it is even to be assumed that a double influence may have been at work here.⁷⁸

In Byzantium the possibility of exchange between popular and learned literature was from the outset more problematic, the bridge between the two traditions extremely difficult to cross. While a few open-minded scholars, such as Eustathios of Thessalonike or the (less sympathetic) canonist Theodore Balsamon (both twelfth century) and, last but not least, hagiography provide some useful insight in folk customs and beliefs, hardly anything is known about Byzantine folk tales.⁷⁹ The binding force of the classical tradition consequently kept popular narratives away and did not allow for them to enter the realm of literature. This situation did not change radically with the emergence of the vernacular, but the lower register certainly loosened the ruling literary standards by widening the spectrum of possibilities. The romance of *Kallimachos*, while written in all likelihood by a learned author, is a case in point.

The author adopts both the narrative structure and several motifs of folk tale,⁸⁰ but at the same time he delights in changing these motifs as to make them fit his erotic plot.⁸¹ The reference type, according to the tales categorization of Aarne, Thompson and Uther (= ATU), is no. 300 *The Dragon Slayer*⁸² with its related subtypes.⁸³ *Kallimachos* shares several scattered motifs with this group of tales, such as the three brothers, the youngest as the best, the dragon controlling the source of water and thus depriving people of water, the dragon's castle, the loneliness of the castle, the dragon's wishing-table, the princess imprisoned, the magic objects

⁷⁸ On the interaction between folklore and medieval literature, see Rosenberg 1979; for a more sceptical approach, see Guerreau 1983.

⁷⁹ See the overview by Meraklis 1992: 27–44 (ch. 2: 'Byzantinisches Erzählgut').

⁸⁰ See the structural analysis of the text by Castillo Ramirez 2000, based on the narratological categories elaborated by V. Propp.

⁸¹ Examples in Diller 1977: 31–6 and already in Megas 1956.

⁸² Uther 2004: 174–5; see Rörich 1981. For the diffusion of the type in the Greek world, see Megas et al. 2002: 20–32; some Greek versions of the tale are analysed by Alexiadis 1982. The best-known ancient version of this type is the classical legend of Perseus and Andromeda, on which see Hansen 2002: 119–22.

⁸³ ATU 300A, 301, 302 and 303 (with the associated subtypes); Uther 2004: 175–88.

(in this case an apple) and the mourning city. However, none of these motifs fulfils the same function it has in the folk tales. What is more, several fundamental elements of the traditional narratives are lacking (e.g. the cutting of the monster's tongue, the false hero, the exposition of the girl), and not a single narrative sequence exactly matches any sequence in a folk tale.⁸⁴ Therefore, it is impossible to say whether the poet found the above-mentioned motifs in a single, already existing (oral) form of the *Dragon Slayer* tale and rewrote them creatively, or rather was inspired by other literary works (e.g. earlier romances, the *Digenis Akritis*⁸⁵ or mythological stories).

The only time the poet of *Kallimachos* comes very close to a sustained fairy-tale narrative sequence is the story, narrated by the heroine herself, about how the dragon (or rather an anthropomorphic ogre, as the Greek form δράκος, instead of δράκων, suggests) abducted her. The monster had fallen in love with her and, faced with her refusal to get married, first withdrew the water of the source, thus depriving people of water. Since the girl still refused to comply, the dragon swallowed her parents and all inhabitants of the kingdom, carried her away and imprisoned her in his golden castle, where he delighted in torturing her every day, though respecting her virginity.⁸⁶ This is indeed the basic outline of one of the oldest folk tales, of which the myth of Perseus and Andromeda as well as the twelfth-century (or possibly earlier) legend of St George the dragon slayer are the best-known literary transpositions.⁸⁷ Here, again, only the main lines of the story have been retained. Fundamental elements of the folk tale, such as the dragon's request to have a young girl sacrificed every year in order to keep the city safe from ravaging or the false hero, have been dropped. The hero's behaviour itself has been downgraded to fit to the awe-inspiring atmosphere of the mysterious castle: it is no coincidence that *Kallimachos* prudently conceals himself when the monster appears and needs to be spurned by the princess in order to fulfil his duty as a hero.

⁸⁴ Admittedly, fairy-tale motifs move easily from one tale to another, are flexibly combined and replaced to fit new contexts also depending on the specific geographical areas; on this, see e.g. Puchner 2016: 94–8 (about the *Dragon Slayer* tale).

⁸⁵ *Digenis Akritis* G 2375–417 (Jeffreys); a Freudian reading of *Digenis*'s encounter with the dragon is to be found in Livanos 2011.

⁸⁶ *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* 648–93 (Cupane); see Diller 1977: 31–2.

⁸⁷ On the Perseus and other dragons-slayer myths as relying on old oral tradition, see Hansen 2002: 118–30; on the George's legend and its relationship to the oral tradition, see Politis 1912/13: 215–25; see also Aufhauser 1911.

The motif of the lonely castle, too, belongs to the category of folk-tale motifs. In some tales, the hero also finds a rich banquet prepared.⁸⁸ Therefore, the possibility that the authors of both *Partonopeu* and *Kallimachos* knew the motif from their respective folk tradition and used it independently from one another cannot be entirely ruled out. To sum up, the blending of learned literary and oral popular sources appears to be a typical feature of the narrative style of both *Partonopeu* and *Kallimachos*. Both literary and folk tradition, therefore, need to be taken into account if we are to do full justice to the complexity and originality of the anonymous poets. And, in speaking of literary tradition within the cultural framework of late Byzantium, western vernacular tradition must – of course – be included. Against the background of the unabated cultural exchanges between western and eastern literature, knowledge of narrative material from both directions, written or oral, must be assumed, even though the ways through which this material was transmitted usually remain in the dark.

Other Traces of *Partonopeu* in Byzantine Vernacular Romances: *Livistros and Rhodamne*

Of course, just one common link would provide a shaky argument. However, the poet of *Kallimachos* was neither the only nor the first who seems to have engaged in a fruitful dialogue with *Partonopeu*. *Livistros and Rhodamne* is thought to have been written in the second half of the thirteenth century, possibly in Constantinople at the court of Andronikos II Palaiologos, thus being a very original product of the early Palaiologan literary revival.⁸⁹ *Livistros* is the only ‘original’ romance that survives in three different versions. Such reworking is evidence both of the popularity of the romance and of its dissemination in the post-Byzantine period. One of the most conspicuous features of *Livistros* is its narrative frame (the author presents his tale as being recited from an intradiegetic narrator in front of his lady, the queen, with her court) and, most particularly, its open-endedness. Indeed, after the protagonists have married and the narrator himself celebrates his wedding with the heroine’s sister, the author lets the tale continue. As a widower, the narrator

⁸⁸ E.g. the tales belonging to the group ATU 400 (*The Man on Quest for his Lost Wife*); Uther 2004: 231–4; see also the list drawn up by Bozoky 1974: 355–6 based on French folk tales.

⁸⁹ On the romance, see Cupane 2016a: 101–10 (with further literature); for an earlier chronology, see Agapitos 1993: 101–17 and Agapitos 2013: 409–15. See also Chapter 4 in the present volume.

returns back home to his first love, so that the narrative itself can be understood as gift of love for her. This could be a satisfying closure for a love tale, but the author keeps the fictive and actual audience in suspense by the promise of a sequel: having brought to conclusion the story of his friend, *Livistros*, the narrator Klitovon searches for an author for his personal love story which, in his opinion, failed to be properly appreciated. This author should have certain characteristics: most importantly, he must possess a sympathetic and compassionate heart and the necessary inclination to write love stories, but otherwise is permitted to abridge and edit the material as he pleases.⁹⁰

Such an open closure is unparalleled in Greek romance literature, ancient and medieval, that always concludes with the wedding of the protagonist couple; instead, it comes very close to what has been aptly called *Partonopeu's* 'poetic of continuation'.⁹¹ In the epilogue of version **B/T**, the continuator-narrator explicitly introduces the possibility of continuing the story if his lady-love *Passe Flore* so desires. He uses this device in order to bind together the continuation he is about to start with the original story. He even enumerates the possible strings of narrative to be picked up, which he summarizes as the stories of three secondary characters. All these threads he develops in a continuation, which reaches its full extent in only one manuscript (**T**).⁹² The similarity to the conclusion of *Livistros* is striking. However, there are also conspicuous differences. In *Livistros*, we have an intradiegetic narrator, and the idea of a sequel is but a rhetorical device, entirely independent from the lady's wish and/or behaviour. Looking at all redactions and manuscripts of the text, there is not the slightest indication that a continuation was planned at all. *Partonopeu*, on the contrary, features an author-narrator who slips into the role of an unrequited lover⁹³ promising a sequel which was already inscribed in the actual text,⁹⁴ and which will actually be achieved, making it dependent on the female assent. Thus, in taking over the narrative device the poet of *Livistros* gave it yet another twist: instead of staging a poet-narrator affording a

⁹⁰ *Livistros and Rhodamne* α 4590–4601 (Agapitos). ⁹¹ Bruckner 1993a: 153.

⁹² See Eley 2011: 1–2, and above.

⁹³ *Partonopeu's* ending will be imitated a decade later in *Le bel inconnu* by Renaut de Beaujeu, who also takes on the literary persona of the unrequited lover promising a sequel of the story depending on the stance of his lady; see on this Walters 1992.

⁹⁴ *Partonopeu de Blois* 5737 and 5739–40 (Collet and Jorris): 'n'en dirais plus a ceste fois | . . . | mais la avant cant je devrai | ses aventures conterai.'

pretext for prolonging the very story he intended to continue, he invented a romance character in search of an author.

This is not, of course, the only device *Livistros* and *Partonopeu* share. In both romances, the bride is won in a tournament expressly summoned in order to choose the one who will be worthy to be the Princess's husband and the kingdom's new ruler. In *Livistros* it is Princess Rhodamne herself, having been already promised to Verderichos, the King of Egypt, who proposes a joust between the two suitors, sure as she is that her beloved *Livistros* will be the winner. No other competitors will take part in the fight, to which the author does not pay particular attention.⁹⁵ In *Partonopeu*, on the contrary, it is the suggestion of Melior's barons, who wish their lady to have a suitable partner at her side and the kingdom a suitable ruler. The competition is a regular tournament with numerous participants along with their retinues fighting against each other, lasting three days.⁹⁶ The description of this event constitutes one major focus of the romance and covers no fewer than 1,800 lines.⁹⁷ Interestingly enough, both romances feature an oriental ruler as the hero's antagonist – the Sultan of Persia in *Partonopeu*, the Egyptian king in *Livistros*.⁹⁸

As different as the literary elaboration of the theme in the two romances may be, they recognizably exploit the same stock material that goes back to an old folkloric fund whose core is also to be found in ancient Greek mythological stories.⁹⁹ The chivalric garb that the motif has been given in *Livistros*, however, clearly depends on *Partonopeu* which, along with Chrétien de Troyes's *Lancelot* and *Hypomédon*¹⁰⁰ by Hue de Rotelonde (both later contemporaries of *Partonopeu*), provides a clear functional link between tournament and bride-winning theme. The latter appears for the first time in medieval Greek narrative literature, and one has to wait until the end of the fifteenth century in order to have a second occurrence in the late *Imberios and Margarona*, itself an adaptation of the extremely successful tale of *Pierre de Provence et belle Maguelonne*.¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ *Livistros and Rhodamne* α, 2382–93 (Agapitos).

⁹⁶ The three days are also a folkloric motif; on its impact on in medieval Arthurian literature see Weston, *The three days' tournament* (without consideration of *Partonopeu*).

⁹⁷ See *Partonopeu de Blois* 6547–632 (Collet and Jorris) for the decision of the barons and 7877–9684 (Collet and Jorris) for the tournament.

⁹⁸ *Livistros and Rhodamne*, α, 2461–4 (Agapitos), the short portrait of the Egyptian king Verderichos = *Partonopeu de Blois* 9963–10.000 (Collet and Jorris) portrait of the sultan Margaris.

⁹⁹ Examples are in Hansen 2002: 56–61. ¹⁰⁰ See Weston 1902: 34–43 and 1–14 respectively.

¹⁰¹ On the adaptation see recently Yiavis 2016: 148–50; cf. Yiavis 2006. See also Chapter 5 in the present volume.

The poet of *Livistros* obviously felt free to adapt the borrowed motif to his narrative concept. He rejected the folkloric detail of the three days as well as the incognito motif, which did not suit to his plot; last but not least, he reduced the huge episode of his template to its mere main lines. He did so perhaps conscious that his audience, evidently fond of lyrical inserts and love poetry, would not have appreciated such a huge description studded with technical details. However known this kind of game may have been in Byzantium at that time,¹⁰² it should have had a bizarre effect on a Byzantine courtly audience and may not have been to everybody's taste.

Be that as it may, the author of *Livistros* was certainly very well acquainted with western literary trends, as I already tried to show elsewhere.¹⁰³ Furthermore, the author himself seems to disclose his knowledge of the medieval chivalric literature by having the heroine – in the fiction a western princess, just as her beloved *Livistros* – declare that 'The Latin race loves the braves, notably those who fight for the sake of love and of adventure'.¹⁰⁴ Fighting for the sake of love and of adventure is indeed a matter of literature, not of reality. Hence, *Rhodamne's* declaration should be understood as the author's admission of his familiarity with chivalric narrative.

To be sure, Byzantine audiences learned to appreciate foreign tales from the West which they adapted and reused in various ways according to their needs and taste, even if they were not prepared to admit it. Western as well as oriental tales, and also scattered, mostly oral narrative motifs, sailed to Byzantium and infiltrated even the exclusive literary court circles. Several routes and opportunities existed, and *Partonopeu* was indeed a very plausible candidate for making the journey and settling down in Byzantium, just as its hero had done. Written in a milieu which maintained stable and friendly relationships with the Komnenian family since decades, the story of a cross-cultural marriage between a Byzantine princess and a scion of the French royal house may well have reached Constantinople on the eve of the Fourth Crusade, just like the *Roman de Troie*.¹⁰⁵ Perhaps it was even Louis of Blois, son of the romance's dedicatees, Thibaut V and Alix of Blois, who joined the Crusader army in 1203 and fell 1205 at the battle

¹⁰² On tournaments in late Byzantium, see Schreiner 1996; Jones and Maguire 2002.

¹⁰³ See Cupane 1992: 292–305; Cupane 2016a: 98–108.

¹⁰⁴ *Livistros and Rhodamne* α, 2392–3 (Agapitos). ¹⁰⁵ Jacoby 1984: 633–4; Folena 1990: 272–3.

of Adrianople, who took the book overseas.¹⁰⁶ We will never know when and how this and other similar journeys took place, but we can be sure that they did. Admittedly, the traces they left are difficult to detect, yet they surely made a decisive contribution to enlarging and enriching the late Byzantine narrative cosmos.¹⁰⁷

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¹⁰⁶ On Louis of Blois, see Longnon 1978: 79–85.

¹⁰⁷ I would like to express my warm thanks to Ingela Nilsson and Adam Goldwyn for thoroughly reading this chapter and making suggestions on English style.

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