

Abduction and Elopement in the Byzantine Novel

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IN THE ANCIENT GREEK NOVELS only rogue suitors or villains perform violent, non-consensual abductions, never the hero. In Theodore Prodromos's twelfth-century Greek novel, by contrast, the hero abducts the heroine with the help of armed accomplices and without her prior knowledge or consent. In a manner unprecedented in the Greek novel, an act of violent non-consensual abduction, characteristic of a villain, belongs to the romantic hero.

Although recent scholars have drawn attention to the abduction theme in the twelfth-century novels,¹ Prodromos's remarkable innovation of a non-consensual abduction of the heroine by the hero seems to have escaped notice.² This paper looks at

¹ See R. Beaton's fundamental book, *The Medieval Greek Romance*² (London 1996) 63–64; also his "Epic and Romance in the Twelfth Century," in A. R. Littlewood, ed., *Originality in Byzantine Literature, Art and Music* (Oxford 1995) 87. See also A. E. Laiou's important article, "Sex, Consent, and Coercion in Byzantium," in A. E. Laiou, ed., *Consent and Coercion to Sex and Marriage in Ancient and Medieval Societies* (Washington 1993: hereafter LAIOU) esp. 200, 211–213, 218.

² The operating assumption by scholars seems to have been that in the twelfth-century novels all abductions of heroines by heroes were consensual. Yet Beaton's perhaps seminal misclassification of Prodromos's hero's abduction of the heroine as a consensual act seems based on a misremembrance of the plot. Prodromos's hero, with a group of huntsmen, abducts the heroine from the bathing-place to which she has been led (2.400–454); he does not ride "up to her bedroom window with twenty henchmen"; she does not go "willingly," having "already exchanged words with him from her upstairs window" (Beaton, "Epic" [*supra* n.1] 87). Laiou also seems to misclassify Prodromos's hero's abduction of the heroine as a consensual act (218): "The consent of the woman is always present when there is an abduction/elopement." Garland too misclassifies Prodromos's hero's forcible abduction of the heroine as an elopement (L. Garland, "Be Amorous, But Be Chaste ...': Sexual Morality in Byzantine Learned and Vernacular Romance," *BMGs* 14 [1990] 72 n.39).

themes of abduction and elopement in the Byzantine novel and relates them to the ancient Greek novel and to the then contemporary debate regarding church and state control over marriage. Such contexts can help us appreciate the significance of Prodomos's striking innovation in representing a hero's violent, non-consensual abduction of a heroine.

Background to the twelfth-century Greek novel

The romantic novel first arose among the Greeks perhaps as early as the late Hellenistic age and continued to flourish possibly well into the fourth century A.D.³ The ancient Greek novels typically featured attractive young men and women who fall in love, often in disregard of their parents' wishes, endure trials and tribulations—including shipwrecks, pirate attacks, rival suitors, and separations—preserve their chastity despite assaults on their persons, and eventually reunite with love intact. Between the fourth and the twelfth centuries, no Greek novels seem to have been written.⁴

Then, after a hiatus of some eight centuries, the genre of the romantic novel was revived in twelfth-century Constantinople with the appearance of four Byzantine novels, three of which survive in their entirety: Theodore Prodomos's *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, Niketas Eugenianos's *Drosilla and Charikles*, and

³ See e.g. S. Swain, "A Century and More of the Greek Novel," in S. Swain, ed., *Oxford Readings in the Greek Novel* (Oxford 1999) 3–12; E. L. Bowie, "The Greek Novel," *ibid.* 39–45.

⁴ On the continued popularity of ancient Greek novels, particularly Achilles Tatius's and Heliodorus's, during the Byzantine period, see e.g. H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner II* (Munich 1978) 121–122; S. MacAlister, *Dreams and Suicides: The Greek Novel from Antiquity to the Byzantine Empire* (London 1996) 109–112; Karl Plepelits, "Achilles Tatius," in G. Schmeling, ed., *The Novel in the Ancient World* (Leiden 1996) 411–413; P. A. Agapitos, "Narrative, Rhetoric, and 'Drama' Rediscovered: Scholars and Poets in Byzantium Interpret Heliodorus," in R. Hunter, ed., *Studies in Heliodorus* (Cambridge 1998) 125–156. On similarities of theme (travel, trials, and so forth) between the ancient Greek novel and such writings as the apocryphal Acts and saints' lives, see e.g. T. Hägg, *The Novel in Antiquity* (Berkeley 1983; rev. *Den Antika Romanen* [Uppsala 1980]) esp. 160–165.

Eustathios Makrembolites' *Hysmine and Hysminias*.⁵ The ancient Greek novels, particularly those written by Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus, served as models for the Byzantine novels, with similarities of storyline, character, theme, gods, and setting. Further, the Byzantine novels are composed in a stylish "Attic" Greek reminiscent of their ancient models, and they are also characterized by generous use of classical rhetorical techniques. Yet although the Byzantine novels are replete with pagan gods, pagan themes, and allusions to ancient texts, they also include topical elements⁶ as well as allusions to Christian themes and motifs.⁷

A striking feature of the ancient Greek novels is their focus on symmetrical, reciprocal love, most commonly at first sight.⁸ Travel is also a major feature, and in both Achilles Tatius's and Heliodorus's novels, the enamored protagonists run away together, escaping arranged marriages.⁹ In two of the three

⁵ The fourth novel, Konstantinos Manasses' *Aristandros and Kallithea*, is extant only in fragments. The texts used for this paper are M. Marcovich, ed., *Theodori Prodrumi de Rhodanthes et Dosioclis amoribus libri IX* (Stuttgart 1992); F. Conca, ed., *Nicetas Eugenianus de Drosillae et Chariclis amoribus* (Amsterdam 1990); M. Marcovich, ed., *Eustathius Macrembolites de Hysmines et Hysminiae amoribus libri XI* (Munich 2001); O. Mazal, *Der Roman des Konstantinos Manasses* (Vienna 1967). Also see F. Conca, transl., *Il romanzo bizantino del XII secolo* (Turin 1994).

⁶ See R. Macrides and P. Magdalino, "The Fourth Kingdom and the Rhetoric of Hellenism," in P. Magdalino, ed., *The Perception of the Past in Twelfth-Century Europe* (London 1992) esp. 149–152; Hunger (*supra* n.4) esp. 131–132, and "Byzantinische 'Froschmänner'?" in R. Hanslik, A. Lesky, and H. Schwabl, edd., *Antidosis: Festschrift für Walther Kraus zum 70. Geburtstag* (Vienna 1972) 183–187.

⁷ On the role of Christian themes (*e.g.* the resurrection and the eucharist) in the shaping of the ancient Greek world in the Byzantine novels, see J. B. Burton, "Reviving the Pagan Greek Novel in a Christian World," *GRBS* 39 (1998) 179–216.

⁸ See D. Konstan, *Sexual Symmetry: Love in the Ancient Novel and Related Genres* (Princeton 1994) chapters 1 and 2. On the shift of focus to an ideal of reciprocity in married life, see M. Foucault, *Le souci de soi, Histoire de la sexualité* III (Paris 1984) esp. 186–192; on "conjugal romanticism," see also S. Treggiari, *Roman Marriage: Iusti Coniuges from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian* (Oxford 1991) esp. 253–261.

⁹ The novels of Xenophon of Ephesus, Longus, and Chariton do not feature protagonists running away to escape arranged marriages.

twelfth-century novels extant to us in their entirety, the reciprocal love between the hero and the heroine also results in elopement, with both parties willing collaborators. Yet in the third novel, Prodromos starts the relationship of his heroine and hero off with a violent, non-consensual abduction, with armed accomplices. The question that arises is, Why would Prodromos choose to tell his story in this unprecedented way?

Civil and canon law on abduction

By the twelfth century, abduction had long been a point of serious contention between civil and canon law in the Byzantine world.¹⁰ The disagreement centered around the institution of marriage, the state for the most part aiming at controlling aristocratic marriages, forbidding romances that might cross class boundaries, while the church aimed at fostering the institution of marriage, with less concern for class difference or initial parental disapproval. Abduction and elopement offered traditional strategies for forcing marriages when parents or guardians and society might object, as exemplified by the stories of Persephone, Helen, Medea, the Sabine women, and so forth. Emperor Constantine's uncompromising edict, *CTh* 9.24.1 (A.D. 326), made the strategy of abduction, consensual or not, less attractive by outlawing marriage between the abductor and the abducted female, condemning the guilty parties to death (including accomplices and the abducted female if she was openly willing), and sentencing to deportation parents or

¹⁰ On abduction see J. Zhisman, *Das Eherecht der orientalischen Kirche* (Vienna 1864) 561–578; J. Evans Grubbs, "Abduction Marriage in Antiquity: A Law of Constantine (*CTh* IX.24.1) and Its Social Context," *JRS* 79 (1989) 59–83; M. Angold, "The Wedding of Digenes Akrites: Love and Marriage in Byzantium in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries," in C. Maltezou, ed., *Η καθημερινή ζωή στο Βυζάντιο* (Athens 1989) 201–215; P. Karlin-Hayter, "Further Notes on Byzantine Marriage: Raptus—ἄρπαγή or μνηστεία?" *DOP* 46 (1992) esp. 136–146, 151; Laiou 109–221; J. Evans Grubbs, *Law and Family in Late Antiquity: The Emperor Constantine's Marriage Legislation* (Oxford 1995) esp. 183–196; D. Lateiner, "Abduction Marriage in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*," *GRBS* 38 (1997) 409–439.

guardians who approved the abduction marriage after the fact; further, the convicted abductor could not appeal the sentence.¹¹ The church's approach to abduction, on the other hand, was more lenient, as exemplified by Canons 22 and 30 of Basil of Caesarea (A.D. 375), which allowed an abducted female to marry her abductor if the appropriate parties consented and she was willing.¹² Although various civil laws somewhat mitigated Constantine's stern edict (by decreeing that the deaths be not cruel and that there be a statute of limitations period of five years),¹³ Justinian's civil code of A.D. 533 reconfirmed the basic state position that abduction could not result in marriage and that death was the penalty for abductor and accomplices (the abducted female now excluded).¹⁴

Complicating both church's and state's legislation on abduction was the issue of the female's consent.¹⁵ Under the Isaurian emperors, a law was issued that permitted a female who was willing and whose parents consented, to marry her seducer (*Ecloga* 17.29).¹⁶ But this leniency was limited to instances of seduction, and the Macedonian law code promptly reaffirmed that armed abduction, regardless of consent, was a capital offense (Leo VI's *Novel* 35, *Basilika* 60.58.1).¹⁷ Conversely,

¹¹ The Latin of this edict, with translation, is available in Evans Grubbs, "Abduction" (*supra* n.10) 59–60 (on dating see 60).

¹² Canon 30 sets a penance penalty only for forcible abductions. See also Canon 38, which allows a secret marriage to stand (with penance) if the girl's parents consent. These canons are found in *Ep.* 199 (R. J. Deferrari, ed. and transl., *The Letters* III [Loeb 1930] 112–115, 122–123, 126–127).

¹³ *CTh* 9.24.2 (A.D. 349) and *CTh* 9.24.3 (A.D. 374). (In Constantine's edict, a collaborating nurse was punished by having molten lead poured down her throat.)

¹⁴ *CJ* 1.3.53, 9.13.1 (II 37, 378 Krueger).

¹⁵ On the issue of consent, see Laiou 109–221.

¹⁶ L. Burgmann, ed. and transl., *Ecloga: Das Gesetzbuch Leons III. und Konstantinos' V.* (Frankfurt am Main 1983) 236–237.

¹⁷ If the abduction did not involve force, the abductor received a lesser penalty (mutilation). P. Noailles and A. Dain, *Les nouvelles de Léon VI le Sage* (Budé 1944) 140–143; H. J. Scheltema, D. Holwerda, N. Van der Wal, edd., *Basilicorum libri LX* (Groningen 1953–88) VIII Text 3110–3112.

within the church also, the question of the female's consent was at times judged irrelevant: both Canon 27 of the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) and Canon 92 of the Council in Trullo (A.D. 691/2) prohibited abduction marriages, regardless of consent.¹⁸ Basil's canons continued to be influential, however, which allowed abductions to result in marriages if all concerned parties consented, including church and parents, with forcible abductions requiring only penance in addition.¹⁹

From the eleventh to the thirteenth century, the legitimacy of abduction marriages was an area of vigorous controversy for legal theorists of both canon and civil law, with varied results. In the eleventh century, in judging a case of armed abduction, the eminent jurist Eustathios Rhomaios argued that a boy's abduction of a girl for the purpose of marriage need not involve rape, and he allowed the marriage to continue, in violation of Leo VI's *Novel* 35 but in accordance with Basil's canons.²⁰ In the twelfth century, two prominent canonists, John Zonaras and Theodore Balsamon (perhaps a generation younger), published opposed opinions in their commentaries on Basil's canons on abduction. Zonaras reconfirmed Basil's Canon 30, which permitted marriage without punishment if the abduction was unforced, no ravishment or robbery took place, and the girl's parents or guardians consented. Balsamon, on the contrary, asserted in his commentary on Canon 30 that an abductor would be subject to not only the penalties prescribed by canon

¹⁸ Migne, *PG* 137.479C–484A, 827C–830C; for discussion see Laiou 135.

¹⁹ On the continued influence of Basil's canons, see e.g. Karlin-Hayter (*supra* n.10) 143.

²⁰ Text and translation: A. Schminck, "Vier eherechtliche Entscheidungen aus dem 11. Jahrhundert," in D. Simon, ed., *Fontes Minores* III (Frankfurt am Main 1979) 224–228. For discussion see Laiou 157–164 (transl. 175–176, by D. Sullivan). Note that Basil's Canons 22 and 25 allow even a rapist to marry his victim, with penance.

law but also the harsher penalties (including capital punishment) prescribed by civil law.²¹

To sum up, the Byzantine state for the most part forbade abduction marriages and condemned forcible abduction as a capital offense, while the church typically offered leniency, penance, and sanction for marriage between the abductor and abductee. The struggle for control over marriage continued under the Komnenian emperors, starting with Alexios I and intensifying under Manuel I,²² who was likely ruler when most, if not all, of the twelfth-century novels were being written.²³ An important topic in the discussion was abduction. Armed abduction committed with accomplices was judged particularly vile according to civil law and the penalty was death.²⁴ In this context, the court writer Theodore Prodromos chose to write a novel featuring the worst-case scenario, a violent, non-consensual abduction of the heroine by the hero with the help of armed accomplices.

The controversies and complexities that surrounded marriage law during the twelfth century, particularly the large disagreement between canon and civil law on issues of abduction and consent,²⁵ may have contributed in no small way to the twelfth-

²¹ G. A. Rhalles and M. Potles, edd., *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων* IV (Athens 1854) 169–172 (canon 30, with commentaries). For discussion see Laiou 136–138; Angold (*supra* n.10) 209–210.

²² See Laiou 139–140; M. Angold, *Church and Society in Byzantium under the Comneni, 1081–1261* (Cambridge 1995) 404–425 (esp. 409–418).

²³ On dating see E. Jeffreys, “The Novels of Mid-Twelfth Century Constantinople: The Literary and Social Context,” in I. Ševčenko and I. Hutter, edd., *ΑΕΤΟΣ: Studies in honour of Cyril Mango* (Stuttgart 1998) 192; Agapitos (*supra* n.4) 144–148; Beaton, *Medieval* (*supra* n.1) 211–212; S. MacAlister, “Byzantine Twelfth-Century Romances: A Relative Chronology,” *BMGS* 15 (1991) 175–210; E. M. Jeffreys, “The Comnenian Background to the ‘Romans d’Antiquité,’” *Byzantion* 50 (1980) 455–486; P. Magdalino, “Eros the King and the King of *Amours*: Some Observations on *Hysmine and Hysminias*,” *DOP* 46 (1992) 197–204.

²⁴ See *Basilika* 60.58.1 and Leo VI’s *Novel* 35, which discount a woman’s consent in such a case (Scheltema *et al.* [*supra* n.17] 3110–3112; Noailles/Dain [*supra* n.17] 140–143; for discussion see Laiou 161–162).

²⁵ Cf. Laiou 139–140: “the twelfth century was eminently the century in which the marriages of the aristocracy were very tightly controlled by the families, the state, and the church, each trying to establish its preeminent right.”

century rebirth of the Greek romance novel.²⁶ What other genre was so well-suited for exploring issues of abduction, elopement, and consent?

Non-consensual abductions by suitors in the Greek novels

A comparison with abductions in other Greek novels underscores the innovation of Prodrornos's abduction. In the ancient novels, only villainous rogue suitors engage in violent, non-consensual abductions intended to lead to marriage. Near the start of Achilles Tatius's novel, for example, a brutal non-consensual abduction by a rogue suitor takes place: a wealthy young Byzantine, Kallisthenes, sets out to abduct the heroine, Leukippe, with the help of armed accomplices (2.13.1–2.18.4) on the grounds that if he abducted and then married her, the only penalty the law would exact was that they must remain married.²⁷ Later in the novel, another rogue suitor, Chaireas, with the help of armed accomplices (5.3.2), abducts Leukippe while she and the hero are visiting Chaireas on the island of Paros.²⁸

²⁶ Cf. Jeffreys, "Novels" (*supra* n.23) 196: "This would seem a plausible framework to account for the motives that might impel Prodrornos to write a novel: a resurgent interest in the forms of classical Greek literature, and a world in which marriage was more than usually a subject for debate."

²⁷ Interestingly, Achilles Tatius represents abduction as an established strategy for marriage in Byzantium (2.13.3): "His strategy was dictated by a Byzantine law, to the effect that if a man kidnapped a maiden and made her his wife before he was caught, his only penalty was to stay married to her" (transl. J. J. Winkler in B. P. Reardon, ed., *Collected Ancient Greek Novels* [Berkeley 1989]).

²⁸ Achilles Tatius underscores the villainous nature of the rogue suitor Chaireas's act of abducting the heroine with the help of armed accomplices, by having the aggrieved hero, Kleitophon, describe the abduction as a pirates' attack (5.7). The linkage between fishermen and pirates was common in the ancient world, and pirates were also popular as mercenaries in the navy (their naval expertise was prized); see P. de Souza, *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World* (Cambridge 1999) 199, 216. For another rogue suitor in the ancient Greek novels who initiates an abduction intended to lead to marriage, see the cowherd Lampis, in Longus's novel, who with the help of a gang of farm workers abducts Chloe (Longus 4.28). Cf. Thersandros, in Achilles Tatius's novel, who approves his slave's suggestion and has him abduct Leukippe, which he does with the help of workmen (Ach. Tat. 6.4; as the slave explains to Leukippe afterwards, abduction "is just my master's way of introducing himself as your lover").

It has often been observed that the heroes of the ancient Greek novels tend to be largely passive figures.²⁹ There is oversimplification in such a statement (consider, for example, the soldierly heroism of Chariton's hero, Chaireas). Nonetheless, the passivity of heroes is evident in the case of elopements/abductions in the ancient Greek novels, for in only two novels, Achilles Tatius's and Heliodorus's, does a hero run away with a heroine to escape family pressure, and in both cases not the hero but an adviser takes the initiative in planning and arranging the elopement. Further, in both cases the heroine has prior knowledge and is fully willing (even eager) to leave with the hero.

In Achilles Tatius's novel, a male cousin and male slave advise the hero in his courtship of the heroine. When the heroine's mother surprises the lovers in her daughter's bedchamber, the hero and slave decide to run away together (2.25.3); they go to the cousin's house, the cousin plans the escape, and, at the cousin's suggestion, the hero asks the slave to invite the heroine to elope with them.³⁰

Heliodorus's *Ethiopian Story* is the only ancient Greek novel in which a violent abduction of the heroine by the hero takes place, but this abduction is both feigned and consensual. The protagonists, Theagenes and Charikleia, had fallen in love at first sight (3.5.4–6), but Charikleia was intended for another (4.6.6). A visiting Egyptian priest, sympathetic with the lovers' plight, arranged a fake abduction for them.

Prodromos's twelfth-century novel took the innovative step of having the hero forcibly abduct the heroine, with the help of armed accomplices, and without the heroine's prior knowledge

²⁹ See e.g. Konstan (*supra* n.8) esp. 30–34.

³⁰ The heroine, however, preempts the invitation with her fervent plea that they take her with them so that she might escape her mother (2.30.1–2). The sternness of the heroine's mother is exemplified by her remark when she thinks her daughter has had consensual sex: "better raped by a victorious Thracian soldier than this" (2.24.3).

or consent. Prodromos's hero, Dosikles, has never communicated with the heroine, Rhodanthe, before the abduction takes place; there is no indication that she has even seen him before. She is kept isolated in a tower, cloistered from men's sight, let out only occasionally, to bathe (2.175–182). Rhodanthe's first sight of Dosikles is in the course of a violent abduction, performed with armed accomplices. There is no mutual love, no reciprocity, no collaboration in the abduction as Dosikles describes it (2.443–454):³¹

When Rhodanthe had been led to the bathing-place,
the men leaped forth with bold courage
and terrified the attendants with their daggers.
All of them fell into utter panic,
and when the unexpected battle broke out,
they scattered into the surrounding streets.
I was suddenly alone with the maiden,
and I lifted her up from the ground, took her in my arms,
and ran down to the sea as fast as I could.
I stepped straightway into a boat that was sailing away,
a boat that belongs to this merchant Stratokles,
and thus I sailed away, leaving behind the land where I was born.

Dosikles' narcissistic focus on himself in the last three lines of this passage underscores the lack of reciprocity and consensuality in this abduction. Although he apologizes to Rhodanthe in advance for telling in her presence the story of the abduction (2.394–399), he does not gloss over the violence and selfishness of the attack.

Dosikles, who prides himself as a warrior valued by society (2.253–281), characterizes his project to obtain the girl as a battle (2.400–405):

I went to my fellow hunters,
brave young men, who know well how to love,
and said, "Help me in a great battle."

³¹ All translations from the Byzantine novels are my own. The line numbers correspond to the editions cited *supra* n.5.

When they asked about the battle
 I told them of Rhodanthe, and Straton and Phryne [her parents]—
 I spoke of love, revealed my passion.

While Dosikles tries to elevate his actions with the imagery of battle, his friends refuse to mystify the violence: they promise “forceful attack, like pirates” if necessary (2.414). They lay bare the criminal nature of such a violent attack by resetting it in the context of piracy.³² Dosikles responds by refiguring the project as a hunt (2.415–416): “Yes, help me, fellow hunters, in the present hunt of the girl.” Insofar as the battle and the hunt were activities traditionally valorized for young men, refiguring his love project in those terms could help rationalize the violence.

Scholars tend to speak slightly of Prodrornos’s treatment of this abduction, perhaps in part because the innovation of its non-consensual nature has been unrecognized: *e.g.*, “Compared with the sophisticated and lengthy discussion of abduction in *Digenes*, the treatment here is trivial, which is useful because it points up the role of abduction as a literary device.”³³ Yet in the economy of the novel, Dosikles’ abduction of Rhodanthe is hardly trivial. Repeatedly this abduction seems to provide a litmus test for the characters of Prodrornos’s novel. In telling a fellow-prisoner of his adventures to date, Dosikles includes the story of his abduction of the heroine just as he told it at a dinner party in Rhodes. Neither at that dinner party nor now in the retelling does Prodrornos have Dosikles disguise the harsh, criminal nature of his actions and impulses regarding Rhodanthe. Dosikles even discloses the seemingly gratuitous detail that he first had in mind raping the heroine in her bedchamber if not successful in his marriage suit and that only his fear that her screams might attract attention deterred him (2.282–295).³⁴

³² *Cf.*, in the case of a feigned, consensual abduction, the presentation of armed collaborators as soldiers (Heliod. 4.17.3).

³³ Laiou 211.

³⁴ Unlike Prodrornos’s hero, Eugenianos’s hero does not mention his initial, less honorable impulses, when he tells his story of elopement (7.144–149).

At the dinner party, Dosikles recites his story at the request of the host, a respectable merchant and father. The audience also includes Rhodanthe and the merchant's wife, daughter, and son, among others.³⁵ One might expect a father to be circumspect about glamorizing, in the presence of his family, such a rebellious tactic as an abduction. Instead the author has Glaukon speak only words of high approval (2.466–468): "The young men were noble, Dosikles, ... may I too, Father Zeus, have such men as friends." Glaukon credits the gods for providing Dosikles with a merchant ship for his escape, and after Dosikles ends his story, Glaukon solemnly invokes the gods to continue to guide and bless the couple (2.455–457, 487–490). Is this meant to be irony on the part of Glaukon, or is he meant to be seen as approving of the hero's violent act of abduction? As the first father figure Dosikles encounters during his flight from parental censure, Glaukon seems to provide a window into a topsy-turvy world in which respectable fathers would approve such abductions, even in the presence of their own children. Perhaps also, in his retelling, Dosikles is projecting onto this father figure the words of approval he wishes to hear from his own father. Dosikles emphasizes Glaukon's respectability as a generous host and a family man.³⁶ By having such a man, in the presence of his family, express approval of Dosikles' abduction of Rhodanthe, Prodrornos raises the stakes. Not only young, hot-blooded huntsmen, but now, in Dosikles' adventure world, also a respectable family man can approve violent, non-consensual abductions, with marriage as the goal.

Dosikles tells the story of his violent abduction of Rhodanthe as if she had no voice (what did she say when the armed men attacked? did she scream?). He grants her speech only after the

³⁵ Dosikles expresses concern in advance about what he will say and how he will frame the abduction in Rhodanthe's presence (2.394–399).

³⁶ Dosikles sums him up, in part from gratitude for his approval (2.492–493): "he was by nature a hospitable man, with a kind heart, a man who sympathizes with the troubles of others."

abduction, when she is under his control. Thus Rhodanthe's first words, her verbal response to her abduction, are filtered through Dosikles, who tries to control their meaning by framing them with Glaukon's lavish words of approval and also offering his own interpretation beforehand (2.472–478):

She spoke words that seemed to oppose my wishes,
but which revealed instead the flame of the love
she nurtures deep in her soul for Dosikles:
“Farewell, robbers of lovely plunder,
fulfillers of my plans,
dear perpetrators of a violence dear to me,
noble executors of a noble coercion.”

Prodromos does not make things simple here. Rhodanthe is first represented by the narrator as a passive object of description, like a statue or a building (1.39–60). But she gains a voice, a self, through the abduction, which also represents a release for her from her father's imprisonment. Her words can be read as deflating the seemingly self-regarding sentimentality of Dosikles' interpretation of them. As in the case of Achilles Tatius's heroine, Leukippe (who runs away with Kleitophon as much to escape the censure of her mother as to be with Kleitophon), other interpretations are possible in the case of Rhodanthe too: after all, she might just have been happy finally to escape the tower in which her father imprisoned her. In a system of dominance and submission, Rhodanthe refuses to be just a victim. Instead her words seem to subvert Dosikles' project and redefine it as her own (“fulfillers of my plans, dear perpetrators of a violence dear to me”). It would be a mistake, however, to interpret these lines as making the abduction consensual. What Rhodanthe makes of the abduction afterwards does not affect the non-consensuality of the act itself, as Dosikles insists to Rhodanthe near the end of the novel, when he realizes a meeting with their fathers is eminent (9.265–269):

You have coercion as your pretext for the flight.
 Address Dosikles insultingly as a pirate,
 a villain, and a robber, since he stole you,
 for yes, I used pirate violence
 and forcibly snatched Rhodanthe away.

Prodromos's interest in the theme of a forcible, non-consensual abduction intended to lead to marriage is taken up by his follower, the novelist Niketas Eugenianos. In Eugenianos's fictive world, as in Prodromos's, the act of forcibly abducting one's beloved, without her prior consent, is definitely in the realm of possible actions by the romantic hero, Charikles (3.367–369):

I was ready to abduct the maiden,
 eager to seize her with both hands
 and cleverly escape her attendants' notice.

Suspecting that consent might make things easier, however, Charikles decides to inform the girl in advance of his plans (3.373–379):

Then, after judging the plan, assessing the risk,
 and realizing that I could not easily and freely
 accomplish the whole of what I contemplated
 unless the girl were privy to my plans,
 I made my desire clear to the maiden,
 revealed my aim and what needed to be done,
 and disclosed the abduction I had in mind.

The author has the hero return to his original plan of forcible, non-consensual abduction when informed of his beloved's betrothal to another. Charikles, intent on minimizing personal risk, plans to take accomplices this time (3.384–386):

I looked to a second method then
 through which, with the help of my friends,
 I could take my beloved without danger.

Drosilla forestalls Charikles' second plan of forcible abduction by revealing her love for him, and they elope on a ship (3.387–

411). By having his hero vacillate between consensual and non-consensual abduction, Eugenianos brings the issue of non-consensual abduction into focus, even while ultimately rejecting that narrative action.

Eugenianos explores the option of non-consensual abduction again, several books later, when he has a rival suitor plot a forcible abduction of the heroine (7.59–61):

Made reckless by his mad love,
he set out to seize her in the pirate manner,
for love often does not know shame.

Eugenianos again deflects the reader's expectation of violence, however, for the abductor falls sick and the scheme evaporates (7.62–72):

While he was plotting to attack the young men
secretly in the solitude of night
with the help of his own young comrades
in order to steal away the girl
(for he was preparing a merchant ship for sailing away),
instead of a flame kindled by desire
the blazing fire of a tertian fever attacked him;
instead of a ship ready to sail
his miserable bed seized him;
instead of a course to another place
he found that he couldn't move.

Following Prodrornos's example, Eugenianos has his hero contemplate a forcible, non-consensual abduction of the heroine. The topic interests him—the linkage of forcible abduction with the romantic hero is something new with Prodrornos—and Eugenianos explores the theme further in the case of the rogue suitor of Book 7. Yet in both cases the forcible abduction plans are aborted. In the lyrical world of Eugenianos's young men—singers and poets—forcible abductions prove too bold for even a rogue suitor (a local innkeeper's son, with literary pretensions) to execute successfully.

Although Eustathios Makrembolites' novel, the third of the extant twelfth-century novels, does not explicitly include the theme of a hero's forcible, non-consensual abduction of a heroine, abduction imagery is included: the omen of an eagle snatching up a sacrificial victim is interpreted by the hero to an eager heroine, in the midst of reciprocal kisses, as a sign that Zeus advocates the heroine's seizure (7.1.2–3).³⁷ The relationship between this hero and heroine, however, is consensual from the start. In fact, the hero represents himself as being less active and initiatory in sexual matters than the heroine at first.³⁸ As for the elopement, Makrembolites has his dilatory hero Hysminias elope with the eager Hysmine only after an enthusiastic friend urges and plans the elopement for him (6.13.1–2, 6.16.2–5, 7.5.1–7.7.1). By not taking the initiative in this elopement, Hysminias follows the pattern of Achilles Tatius's and Heliodorus's heroes, not Prodrornos's and Eugenianos's. Makrembolites' novel does not even include a secondary plot of abduction; the hero's male friend disappears early in the novel, without a love story of his own. Instead the violence of forcible abduction is supplied by savage pirates capturing women en masse in raids and raping them (8.2.2–8.8.3; 11.8.3, 11.9.2–3). Unlike Prodrornos's novel, Makrembolites', with its focus on the hero's role as religious herald, heightens rather than blurs the distinction between gentle hero and brutal pirates.

The most innovative aspect of these abductions in the Byzantine novels is the inclusion of the theme of a hero's forcible, non-consensual abduction of the heroine for the purpose of

³⁷ On how this omen signifies an abduction and foreshadows the lovers' eventual elopement, see Beaton, "Epic" (*supra* n.1) 87; *cf.* in Heliodorus's novel the heroine's father's dream of an eagle snatching his daughter, with interpretations (4.14.2–4.15.1).

³⁸ The hero, Hysminias, is the first-person narrator of the entire novel; on "Eustathios' consistent use of first-person viewpoint," see M. Alexiou, "A Critical Reappraisal of Eustathios Makrembolites' *Hysmine and Hysminias*," *BMGS* 3 (1977) 23–43 (quotation from 30).

marriage.³⁹ During the twelfth century, under the Komnenian emperors, the handling of abductions persisted as an area of radical difference between canon and civil law. According to canon law, even a forcible, non-consensual abduction could result in marriage afterwards, should the girl be willing and parents and church approve, and would entail only the relatively lenient penalty of a penance period, generally three years; a consensual abduction (elopement) would not require a penance period. Civil law, on the other hand, decreed that forcible, non-consensual abductions would entail capital punishment for abductor, with suitable punishment also for accomplices, other collaborators, and even the parents should they have afterwards approved a marriage between abductor and abductee; severe penalties would apply even were the abduction consensual.⁴⁰ Prodromos's and Eugenianos's striking inclusion of the theme of forcible, non-consensual abduction in their romance novels would have drawn attention to this area of extreme and persistent difference between civil and canon law. Further, by having a love relationship that ends in marriage start with the hero forcibly abducting the heroine, Prodromos seems to endorse canon law's more lenient approach toward abduction, as opposed to the harsh approach typically taken in civil law.⁴¹ Novels linking abductions with marriage might have appealed

³⁹ For the suggestion that the popularity of the bride-snatching scenes in *Digenes Akrites* might have contributed toward the interest in abductions in the twelfth-century novels, see Beaton, "Epic" (*supra* n.1) 87–88, and his *Medieval* (*supra* n.1) 64. Note, however, that in *Digenes Akrites* the emir seizes a general's daughter as part of his booty during a series of attacks on Byzantine villages and not for the purpose of marriage (although he ends up marrying her), and the emir's son Digenes elopes with a girl, with her full consent (for discussion see Laiou esp. 201–206, 209).

⁴⁰ For discussion of a case of extreme punishment of abduction by civil law under the Emperor Manuel I Komnenos, see Angold (*supra* n.10) 209–210.

⁴¹ Under civil law, as penalty for his armed abduction, Prodromos's Dosikles would be killed and his accomplices mutilated; under canon law, Dosikles could, with penance, marry Rhodanthe. Under civil law, as penalty for his unarmed abduction (in this case a consensual elopement), Eugenianos's Charikles would lose his hand and his hope to marry Drosilla (Leo VI's *Novel* 35, *Basilika* 60.58.1); under canon law, he could marry Drosilla without penalty. The elopement in Makrembolites' novel would be handled similarly.

to contemporary young persons contemplating marriage and wondering whether passionate love could have a role in marriage. There is evidence that the reading of such novels could have alarmed parents, whose concerns would have included anxiety about their authority over their children in matters of matrimony. For example, George Tornikios speculates, in his funeral oration for Anna Komnene, regarding the anxiety of her parents over the effects of her reading profane poetry, among whose themes he specifies “the violation of virgins” and “the abduction of youths”: “this study they rightly thought dangerous even for men, and for women and girls excessively insidious.”⁴²

Pirates and rape

Prodromos emphasizes the violent and unlawful nature of his hero’s non-consensual abduction of the heroine by highlighting analogies between his behavior and that of pirates. For example, Prodromos repeatedly has various characters explicitly draw parallels between the hero’s actions and those of a typical pirate. Thus, for example, Dosikles’ accomplices, when planning the abduction with Dosikles, announce that they would attack like pirates (2.414). At the novel’s end, Dosikles himself twice compares his behavior in forcibly abducting Rhodanthe to a pirate’s, for example, when addressing Rhodanthe (9.265–269):

You have coercion as your pretext for the flight.
Address Dosikles insultingly as a pirate,
a villain, and a robber, since he stole you,
for yes, I used violence by pirate custom
and forcibly snatched Rhodanthe away.

and again, when addressing Rhodanthe’s father (9.294–296):

⁴² For the Greek text see J. Darrouzès, ed., *Georges et Dèmètrios Tornikès: lettres et discours* (Paris 1970) 245; transl. R. Browning, “An Unpublished Funeral Oration on Anna Comnena,” in R. Sorabji, ed., *Aristotle Transformed: The Ancient Commentators and Their Influence* (Ithaca 1990) 404–405.

Here I am: whip me, punish me,
glut yourself on my flesh, drink up my blood.
The thief, the pirate is in your hands.

Although Rhodanthe elides the details of the abduction when she tells the story of her adventures to her master's daughter, the violence is not erased, only expressed differently. Rhodanthe's use of similar words in close sequence to describe Dosikles' abduction of her and the pirates' subsequent capture of them both, suggests that Rhodanthe too sees parallels between Dosikles' behavior and a pirate's cruelty:

καὶ ξυλλαβὼν με καὶ βαλὼν ἐν φορτίδι
[Dosikles] seized me and threw me into a ship (7.244) ...
κατέσχευεν ἡμᾶς καὶ βαλὼν ἐν ὀλκάδι
[the pirate band] seized us and threw us into a ship" (7.248).

In the ancient Greek novels, heroes do not contemplate raping heroines; they prefer consensual relations.⁴³ Rape was regarded as characteristic of pirates,⁴⁴ as illustrated by the rogue suitor Thersandros's response to Leukippe's claim that she is still a virgin (Ach. Tat. 6.21.3):

Ridiculous! A virgin after nights with all those pirates? Did the desperadoes become eunuchs just for you? Was the pirates' lair a school of philosophy? Did none of them have eyes?

Leukippe turns this contention around to claim that Thersandros and his servant Sosthenes are no better than pirates (6.22.1–2):

None of them was such a rapist. Look at what you're doing; you are the real pirates! Aren't you ashamed to do what even brigands have not dared?

⁴³ In fact, in Longus's novel, *Daphnis*, after his sexual initiation with an older woman, fears making love to Chloe even with her consent, because it might cause her pain (3.19–20).

⁴⁴ On pirates in ancient fiction, see de Souza (*supra* n.28) 214–218 (on how "pirates represent lust," 215–216).

In reviving the ancient Greek novel, Prodrornos takes the radical step of having his hero seriously consider raping the heroine if her father refuses his suit (2.282–285):

But if Straton [her father] does not wish this union,
 what sort of water can I find to quench my fire?
 Shall I enter the maiden's chamber, head-strong,
 at night, and commit the act of violence?

Dosikles is deterred only by his fear that the heroine would scream and attract attention and he would suffer reprisals (2.286–295). Thus Prodrornos shows Dosikles, the hero, viewing Rhodanthe as an object to be abused and pillaged: if her father will not give her to him, he contemplates raping her, and he settles on violently abducting her, with armed accomplices and without her consent.⁴⁵

Prodrornos underscores the criminal nature of Dosikles' impulse to rape Rhodanthe by having a pirate experience the same impulse later. When Dosikles and Rhodanthe are imprisoned by pirates, the pirate king's henchman, Gobryas, makes a suit for Rhodanthe to the pirate king, who thus acts as her new guardian (3.173–176):

I ask you to give her to me in marriage.
 I helped seize her in Rhodes;
 she is the plunder of my hands,
 the pillage of my blade, the booty of my sword.

Gobryas's claim to the girl is not different from what Dosikles could claim after his violent abduction of her. Gobryas's request is denied, but even so he courts Rhodanthe, and when she refuses him, he turns to rape (3.265–287), which is described as a "more pirate-like path of action" (3.267). Rhodanthe escapes, however, with torn garment, and Gobryas does not pursue her as he fears punishment from the pirate chief (3.320–325).

⁴⁵ On how, within the church, even rape and violent abduction could lead to marriage, see Basil's Canons 22, 25, and 30.

It is not unusual in the Greek novels for pirates and other rogues to engage in courtship and desire marriage with the protagonists.⁴⁶ What is new in Prodrornos's novel is the careful parallels drawn between the hero's less than honorable acts and those of a brutal pirate: the hero too contemplated raping the heroine but was deterred by a similar fear of reprisal (2.282–295); he too abducted the heroine at swordpoint, without her consent. The negative parallels that Prodrornos draws between the hero's initial acts and impulses (rape, non-consensual abduction) and a pirate's are unique among the twelfth-century novels and without precedent in the ancient novels.⁴⁷ Rather than simply elevating the quality of a pirate's love to the level of a hero's, a typical move in ancient Greek novels,⁴⁸ Prodrornos takes the radical step of lowering the quality of his hero's lustful

⁴⁶ Thus too, in Prodrornos's novel, the pirate Gobryas dies a romantic's death in battle, with his beloved Rhodanthe's name on his lips (6.52–56). On the reader's possible empathy for such a figure, see, e.g., M. Fusillo, "Modern Critical Theories and the Ancient Novel," in Schmeling (*supra* n.4) 295–299. On the uniformity of *eros* in the ancient Greek novel, see Konstan (*supra* n.8) esp. 41–42, 58: "it [*eros*] motivates the meanest villains, male or female, in the same way as it does the protagonists themselves" (41).

⁴⁷ In the ancient Greek novels, only scoundrels and rogue suitors, not heroes, are likened to pirates, and commonly when engaged in actions of rape and/or non-consensual abduction (e.g. Ach. Tat. 6.22.1–2, quoted above). But the pirates and brigands themselves rarely attempt rape; more commonly sacrifice or commerce is their goal (for a bandit's rare attempted rape of the heroine, see Xen. Eph. 4.4.4–5). In the Byzantine novels, on the other hand, pirates freely engage in acts of sexual brutality and rape (see Makrembolites 8.2.2–8.8.3, 11.8.3, 11.9.2–3; Prodrornos 6.124–125, 132–133). So too scoundrels and rogue suitors continue to be likened to pirates when engaged in acts of rape or non-consensual abduction, see e.g. Eugenianos 7.60 (an inn-keeper's son is described as intending to seize the heroine "in the pirate manner"). But although, in Makrembolites' novel, pirates sexually brutalize and rape captive non-virgin females, they do not rape maidens since virgins fetch a high price at market; alleged maidens must pass a virginity test before sale (8.7, 11.16.1).

⁴⁸ See Konstan (*supra* n.8) esp. 41–45 (as Konstan notes, a major difference is that the love of rogues and rival suitors is not reciprocated). In the ancient novels, pirates and thieves are also sometimes elevated almost to the moral level of the heroes (e.g., Heliodorus's Thyamis, a pirate but also son of a *prophetes* in Memphis, and Xenophon's Hippothoos, a brigand but also the hero's best friend; both of these were respectable men who became outcasts but are redeemed by novel's end).

impulses, at least at the start of the relationship, to match those of a brutal pirate.⁴⁹

The rise of the cruel romantic hero

A related plot motif worth notice in the context of a discussion of a hero who acts like a villain is the rise of the motif of the cruel romantic protagonist who ends up marrying the girl he initially mistreats. This plot structure is not unknown in Antiquity, of course. There is a strong mythological tradition of cruel abduction-marriages; for example, Hades' violent non-consensual abduction of Persephone, which led to marriage (more often such encounters between mortals and gods merely result in the illegitimate births of heroes).

This plot motif is especially strong in New Comedy, in which girls are often raped by men who end up marrying them. In Terence's *Eunuchus*, for example, the protagonist, a handsome, highly eligible young man, deliberately and brutally rapes a girl he has no intention of marrying (he thinks she is a prostitute); later it is revealed that she is a citizen, and her brother consents to her marriage to her rapist. Again, in Terence's *Hecyra*, the protagonist, while drunk, meets a girl on the street and rapes her. Later he marries, his wife becomes pregnant too soon for the child to be his, he plans to divorce her to save his good name, but in the end it turns out that she is (happily) the very girl he raped nine months ago.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Makrembolites' novel takes the motif of the hero's near rape of the heroine further physically than Prodromos, but the hero is also more solicitous of the heroine. For example, when Hysminias comes to the heroine, Hysmine, in her bed (their parents are at a sacrifice), at first she is compliant, but when he tries to complete the act, she resists vigorously, and so he ceases his advances, and they weep together (5.15–18; cf. his repeated, interrupted attempts to force himself on the heroine, e.g. 4.22–23, 7.4–5, and his dream at 5.3.1–3). When Hysminias tells their story later, at a meal, in the presence of priest and parents, he admits that he had wanted to consummate the union at once, without Hysmine's consent, the minute they had agreed to marry (11.6.1). In Eugenianos's novel, on the other hand, the hero seeks only consensual sex with the heroine.

⁵⁰ On the troubling status of the rape in Terence's *Eunuchus*, see e.g. R. L. Hunter, *The New Comedy of Greece and Rome* (Cambridge 1985) 94–95; L. P.

The early Greek novel by Chariton also features cruelty from a romantic hero against the heroine. The novel begins with the usual reciprocal love at first sight, resulting in marriage, but shortly afterwards the hero, believing that his wife is cheating on him, kicks her in the stomach hard enough to knock her out (1.4.12–1.5.1). Nonetheless, in the end, after a novel's worth of adventures, they are happily reunited, love intact.⁵¹

In a subplot of Achilles Tatius's novel, a rogue suitor violently and without consent abducts the wrong girl by mistake. But he then falls in love with his captive, transforms himself from rogue to model citizen, and wins her love and her family's consent to the marriage. As he explains (8.17.3–4):

Lady, do not think me a pirate or cutthroat ... Eros has made me act the role of a robber and weave this plot against you. From this day forward you must think of me as your slave ... I shall respect your virginity for however long you please.

Achilles Tatius foregrounds his interest in character change here ("this was a sudden and amazing transformation in the young man ... Everyone was amazed at the suddenness of his transformation from wastrel to gentleman ... I was reminded of what they say about Themistokles" (8.17.5, 8.17.7)).⁵²

This motif of a profligate who changes because of love also emerges as a secondary plot elsewhere. Thus in the Byzantine epic *Digenes Akrites*, an emir falls in love with a female captive from one of his raids and converts to Christianity in order to marry her: "He renounced his faith, kin, and country" for her

Smith, "Audience Response to Rape: Chaerea in Terence's *Eunuchus*," *Helios* 21 (1994) 21–38. See also K. F. Pierce, "The Portrayal of Rape in New Comedy," in S. Deacy and K. F. Pierce, edd., *Rape in Antiquity* (London 1997) 163–184.

⁵¹ On issues of paternity in Chariton's novel, see S. Schwartz, "Callirhoe's Choice: Biological vs Legal Paternity," *GRBS* 40 (1999) 23–52.

⁵² Cf. Plut. *Them.* 2.5. On Kallisthenes' change of character, see e.g. Hägg (*supra* n.4) 53.

(G2.9).⁵³ So too she falls in love with him, despite their inauspicious start.

In Prodromos's novel, although the protagonist's abduction of his beloved is violent, performed with the help of armed accomplices, and non-consensual, the girl's feelings seem quickly to turn to reciprocal love. Dosikles interprets her first words following the abduction as loving (2.472–474, quoted above). By the time they arrive in Rhodes and are invited to attend an open-air feast, Rhodanthe is calling Dosikles her husband and consulting him regarding the propriety of eating with strange men (2.58–88).

A significant difference between New Comedy and the novel is that in New Comedy typically the woman's response to her rape is not explored; in fact, in Terence's *Eunuchus* and *Hecyra*, discussed above, the rape victim never even appears on stage, much less expresses an opinion about being married to her rapist. In the ancient and the twelfth-century novels, on the other hand, the girl's responses are explored in detail. Thus, in Prodromos's novel, Rhodanthe transcends the cruel circumstances of her capture and reciprocates the love of her captor. This is a kind of relationship that is further developed in Western literature: a cruel romantic hero whose love for the heroine changes him and comes to be reciprocated by the heroine.

Sexual symmetry

The ancient Greek novels brought something new to ancient fiction: a focus on the ideal of reciprocal and enduring passionate love between a male and a female.⁵⁴ The symmetry of the protagonists' relationship was typically established at their first

⁵³ E. Jeffreys, ed. and transl., *Digenis Akritis* (Cambridge 1998); J. Mavrogordato, ed. and transl., *Digenes Akrites* (Oxford 1956).

⁵⁴ Konstan (*supra* n.8) esp. 7–13, 45–59; M. Fusillo, *Il Romanzo greco: Polifonia ed eros* (Venice 1989) 186–196; Foucault (*supra* n.8) 220, 262–266.

meeting. Young, beautiful, and attracted to one another, the protagonists typically responded to love's onset with passivity.⁵⁵

When the Greek romantic novel is revived in the twelfth century, two of the three fully extant Byzantine novels—Prodrornos's and Eugenianos's—start with a radical departure from that model. Rather than respond passively to the onslaught of love, their romantic heroes take charge, make plans, initiate actions, and seize the heroine, with or without her consent.⁵⁶ Yet although these heroes start by displaying a higher level of energy and initiative than most heroes of the ancient novels, they seem to fade in power and assertiveness during the course of the novel.

The aggressive actions Prodrornos's hero contemplates and takes against the heroine characterize him initially as the most brutal and self-willed of the heroes of the twelfth-century novels in matters of love. Conversely, Prodrornos's heroine is the most sequestered and passive of the heroines. Kept imprisoned by her father in a small tower, she is a silent, withdrawn figure at the start of the story. The introductory description of her appearance emphasizes these qualities (1.39–60): she is like a

⁵⁵ In Xen. Eph. and Chariton, the protagonists become sick with love, and to cure them their parents must arrange that they marry one another. In Heliod., the protagonists become sick with love, the girl is already promised, so a visiting priest arranges their elopement. In Longus, the protagonists gradually discover their love for one another and their sexuality, with the help of teachers. Even in Achilles Tatius's novel, in which there is initial asymmetry (the boy falls in love with the girl first), the hero seeks help from others, and when the protagonists leave town together, the hero's cousin has made the arrangements.

⁵⁶ In Prodrornos, the girl is kept highly sequestered, in a small, prison-like tower; the boy sees her at her bath, contemplates rape, discovers she is already betrothed, and so abducts her instead, with armed accomplices and without her consent. In Eugenianos, the boy sees the girl at a festival, contemplates abduction but communicates with her instead, discovers that she is already betrothed, contemplates abduction again but learns that she wants to marry him, and so elopes with her. Makrembolites' novel, on the other hand, starts the love relationship differently: the heroine, more erotically advanced than the hero, tries to entice him repeatedly over dinner, but he is too naive to understand, and his friend must explain things to him.

majestic statue, a magnificent building, not a vibrant woman.⁵⁷ But in the course of her adventures, she changes, eventually attaining a level of activity and passion equal to the hero's. This change can be charted by comparing her behavior at two dinner parties. At the first dinner party, which takes place shortly after her abduction, Rhodanthe is reluctant to eat with men and only willing when warned that she would go hungry otherwise. Reclusive and timid, with no experience to draw upon, she relies on Dosikles' advice. Although she proleptically addresses him as husband, she makes her chastity and modesty abundantly clear (2.61–75):

Husband, you know my fortune well
 (for I call husband my dear Dosikles,
 whom nuptials and bridal chambers did not unite with me,
 nor the bridal union, the shared bed,
 the bindings of mutual embraces,
 but a respectful relationship and desire without passion
 and the chaste bond of bodies not joined),
 Husband, you know my fortune well,
 for I am both a wife and a maiden,
 and I avoid the sight of any man,
 and more by far the sight of one who is clearly a stranger
 that someone may not look at me with passion,
 with depraved eyes, as at a shameful show.
 How then, Dosikles, could I go through the door
 and, the only woman, eat with so many men?

Later, after being captured by pirates, almost raped by a pirate, then shipwrecked and sold into slavery, she becomes so self-assertive that, while serving at a mixed dinner party, she bares

⁵⁷ The static nature of Rhodanthe's description is intensified by the static quality of her introduction into the novel in the lines just preceding: "Among these [captives] were Dosikles and the maiden Rhodanthe, bound together by the hand of a cruel barbarian" (1.37–38). Cf. Eugenianos's more animated introductory description of his heroine, in the context of a remembrance of her appearance as she came out from the city wall with a group of dancing girls for a festival (1.120–158, e.g. her lips like an opened beehive as they poured forth the honey of her speech, her breasts glistening with morning dew).

her hands to Dosikles in an attempt to gain his recognition (8.299–302):

She stood before Dosikles,
uttered low moans, even started to weep,
and exposed her hands to the wrist
so that he might recognize the articulation of her fingers.

Although such a gesture might seem transparent to her (her earlier description of Dosikles showed high awareness of his hands),⁵⁸ Dosikles does not “see” her in her slave garb (8.290–295):

How could he have recognized his golden girl
when she was dressed in a ragged frock,
wasted in her flesh, and, in short, a slave?
Rhodanthe, however, recognized Dosikles,
and how greatly her desire roused her
to embrace him and kiss his mouth!

Her appearance and demeanor are so different now from what Dosikles remembers that he cannot recognize her (8.303–312).⁵⁹ Too timid earlier to want to attend a mixed dinner party, now when asked to tell her story to dinner guests, she boldly rebukes both her master’s son and Dosikles for not recognizing her from their former adventures together. Dosikles becomes faint and must be revived with smelling salts (8.361–366); Kratandros leads her to a place at the dinner table.

Rhodanthe’s adventures change her: she learns to tell her story and recognize and articulate her desires, first to another young woman, then to her master and mistress, and finally to the mixed company of dinner guests. From a passive, mostly non-speaking role, she grows even to the point of describing

⁵⁸ 7.228–232: “His hand was beautiful, but more beautiful by far / when it was in action, moving naturally / (I blush to tell you what it was doing, / but I’ll tell you nonetheless, Myrilla—I can’t help it), / fastened affectionately upon my neck.”

⁵⁹ This motif, with variations, is common in the ancient and medieval Greek novels (e.g. Ach. Tat. 5.17.3–5.19.3; Helioid. 7.7; Makr. 9.5–10, 9.15); what is notable here is Prodromos’s focus on the heroine’s desire.

graphically to another woman her beloved's beauty. Her description of Dosikles is extensive and erotic (7.213–238), climaxing with a description of the movement of his hands as he caresses her neck, and of his lips as he laughs and kisses her. Her dynamic description of him (the first extended description of Dosikles' beauty) contrasts greatly with the initial description given of her, which is static, a comparison to a statue and a building. Unlike Achilles Tatius's Leukippe who, after her initial willingness to have a boy in her bedchamber, becomes more chaste in the course of the novel, Prodromos's Rhodanthe becomes more outspoken and erotically assertive as the novel progresses. Outside the control of the patriarchy, where marriages are arranged, she can claim eros as part of her life too. As her circumstances shift, so too does her sense of self. The novel starts with the desiring male subject (Dosikles) and the female (Rhodanthe) a static object of description, but by the end, Rhodanthe also has become a desiring subject.⁶⁰ Another sign of Rhodanthe's growing boldness (and Dosikles' increased lassitude) is the role shift near the end of the novel, when Rhodanthe urges that they leave Cyprus and move on with their lives (make a bridal chamber), and Dosikles argues that they should remain in Cyprus. Prodromos emphasizes this reversal by having Dosikles' reasons for his reluctance to leave (fear of danger and ignorance of geography, 9.98–121) echo Rhodanthe's concerns earlier, when as a slave she decides against running away to find Dosikles (7.151–160).

⁶⁰ Lest a woman reader feel self-satisfied with the implications of such a sequence of events, Prodromos has a female rival paralyze Rhodanthe with poison at the end of the second dinner. Just as Rhodanthe seems to have attained her wish through self-assertion (to be reunited with Dosikles, to be able to feel his hands caressing her neck again), she is made a static object again. It takes a male to rescue her (Dosikles revives her with an herb); she comes to life again on his terms. But if this sequence of events seems to raise the issue of the dangers of self-assertion (and desire?) for a woman, Prodromos complicates such a complacently male reading as well, for Dosikles learned about the herb only by watching a female bear cure her own paralysis on one side.

Thus in the course of Prodromos's novel, Dosikles seems to become less bold and decisive and Rhodanthe more so. Rhodanthe even comes to view herself and her enduring chastity and fidelity as a paradigm for maidens, her reward for diligent self-surveillance, as her self-assertion shows (7.120–123):

You will not be hated by your dearest ones
in the belief that women love falsely,
for I have now provided a noble example
for beloved maidens. Yes, emulate me!

The power relations between the hero and heroine change dramatically in the course of the novel, starting with a great imbalance between dominant, forceful hero and submissive, passive heroine, and ending in a state of greater symmetry, with Rhodanthe more passionate and assertive and Dosikles more quiescent (*e.g.* his answer to Rhodanthe's urgings to leave Cyprus: "Let us consider the matter again next year," 9.122–123). At this moment of stalemate, the protagonists' fathers unexpectedly appear. But how can the couple return to a system dominated by stern fathers now that they have learned other ways to behave?

Recontainment within the church

The power of the priests at the end of the novels helps show the way to a reconciliation between family/state and church regarding marriage. In Prodromos's novel, when the fathers find their children in Cyprus, the two fathers and the two children embrace in an elaborately described interwoven hug signifying a dual family unity of purpose and affection (9.315–341). Yet when they arrive home in Abydos, the two fathers disagree about everything regarding the wedding: who should take the other home, who should prepare the feast, where to build the bridal chamber and set up the wedding (9.455–460). The image of familial unity is broken; not even the fathers can agree. It takes a priest to intervene, impose his authority, and restore

harmony: he arrives, takes charge, and urges everyone into the temple that he might marry the couple there. In Eugenianos's novel, on the other hand, on arriving home in Phthia, the fathers behave in harmony, taking turns entertaining each other. Still, in the midst of public embraces and celebration, once again the authority among them, the priest of Dionysus, arrives and instructs the people to go to the temple that he might marry the couple there. Thus in both Prodromos's and Eugenianos's novels, a priest brings the couple and the people into a temple for the wedding to take place.

The case is otherwise in Makrembolites' novel. The final wedding takes place at Hysmine's house, in a garden not a temple, and a priest is not presiding.⁶¹ Still, this novel too seems to endorse the church's power and authority over the family's, for back in Daphnepolis, after the children's reunion with their parents at Apollo's altar, when the priest is hosting parents and children at a luncheon, Hysmine's father tries to shame his daughter for her immodesty in running away (11.12.3–4). The priest intervenes, rebukes the father, and reassures the heroine that she need not be ashamed of either her conduct or her speech, that in fact the father should be ashamed for shaming her. The priest's leniency toward the daughter and correction of the father's severity is in accordance with the Byzantine church's leniency in its attitude toward elopement/abduction. This priest's successful advocacy of the marriage of hero and heroine at the close of the novel affirms the novel's move away from the authority of the family to the authority of the church; this elopement, with the blessing of the priest, results in marriage.

Another factor related to the power of the church is the change of emphasis in love. Rather than passionate and enduring love being the focus, now procreation is also a strong

⁶¹ The epic-romance *Digenes Akrites* also does not include a wedding celebrated by priests (for discussion see Angold [*supra* n.10] esp. 203–205).

part of the equation, more so than in the ancient Greek novels. The close linkage of marriage and procreation, particularly in Prodrornos's novel, may have helped keep the novel's focus on erotic (passionate) love from offending contemporary Christian readers. Thus, for example, Dosikles laments for bed and babies lost when he thinks Rhodanthe has drowned after a shipwreck (6.362–372):

High hopes warmed us
 as we set out on the road from Abydos to Rhodes,
 expecting to have our nuptials in alien places,
 dreaming of bed times in foreign lands,
 and imagining the marriage bed and marriage embraces.
 The hope of a pregnant womb cheered us.
 The expectation of beautiful babies gladdened us.
 We built a splendid bridal chamber to be,
 and we imagined a non-existent fruit of our loins,
 taking pleasure in a false delight, for Envy did not allow
 our hopes to be fulfilled.⁶²

In Prodrornos's novel, despite her violent abduction, the heroine falls in love with her captor, and in the end her parents approve and a priest performs the wedding inside a temple. By starting with a worst case of unlawful, violent abduction and showing it result in a sanctified marriage based on friendship and romance, Prodrornos's novel seems to endorse the church's

⁶² The linkage of procreative and marriage themes is strongest in Prodrornos's novel; see too 6.390–391, 3.47–52 (during a romantic interlude, vines remind the hero of how mothers look like their children); cf. the strong pregnancy motif at the pirates' symposium and in battle context in Books 4 and 5 *passim*, 6.126–127 (for discussion see Burton [*supra* n.7] 192–194). Elsewhere in the Byzantine novels, the procreative theme is not as pervasive. In Eugenianos's novel, see 8.84–88, for another romantic hero's linkage of procreation and marriage as he seeks to seduce the heroine in a garden: "You see the trees", he said and pointed with his finger, / "how many nests of young birds they bear. / There the marriage of sparrows is consummated; / the tree is the wedding hall, the branch the bridal chamber, / and the leaves the marriage bed"; cf. 5.131–145. In the ancient Greek novels, only once is the theme of procreation linked with passionate marriage (Ach. Tat. 5.16.6: a supposed widow is trying to seduce the hero into marriage at sea); more often procreation is linked with dutiful marriage, especially in Chariton (e.g. 3.1.6–8, 3.2.2) and also in Heliod. (1.19.7, 10.40.2).

more lenient approach to marriage, against the harsher edicts of civil law. Further, both Prodromos's and Eugenianos's novels end by conforming to the church's rules for marriage, that the union needs to be sanctified in the church, a requirement in Byzantium since the time of Leo VI.⁶³

Conclusion

Two of the three Byzantine novels start with a criminal act of non-consensual abduction contemplated and, in the case of Prodromos's novel, executed by the hero. Such abductions threaten a foundation of Byzantine society, the ability of upper-class parents to arrange their childrens' marriages. Questions that might naturally have arisen for Byzantine readers of such novels include, What should society do about young persons who violate the system of arranged marriages? Should criminal abductions result in marriages? What if the abductions are brutal and non-consensual? How should society respond? And perhaps also, Should I acquiesce to my parents' choice of my marital partner? Are there other options for me?

The Byzantine novels, in reviving the ancient novels (notably Achilles Tatius's and Heliodorus's), offer escapist narratives of how one might run away from a repressive society, a society of arranged marriages, a comfortable fixed life, and enter the danger zone—a place of shipwrecks, pirates, stark challenges to personal identity. These novels also provide narratives of how a hero and heroine might return, with society allowing a space, finally acknowledging and accepting even an initially illicit love. The Byzantine novels go beyond that traditional plot, however, to include the theme of a criminal, non-consensual abduction of the heroine by the hero. Prodromos's novel offers an extreme

⁶³ The marriage legislation of Leo VI (A.D. 886–912) includes the decree (*Novel* 89) that only marriages consecrated in church were valid (Noailles/Dain [*supra* n.17] 294–297). Balsamon's commentaries on Canons 38 and 40 underscore the continued necessity of the church service in the twelfth century (Rhalles/Potles [*supra* n.21] 183, 187). For discussion, see Angold (*supra* n.22) 404, 414–415.

version of this innovation since it starts with an abduction, armed and with accomplices, which is punishable by death under civil law. Yet Prodromos's novel too results in passionate, reciprocal love, approved by family and sanctioned by priest. Prodromos's novel thus holds contemporary abduction law up for view, and its happy ending corresponds to the church's more lenient position that abductions could lead to marriage, as against the state's.

The Byzantine novels have often been considered trivial, hardly worth mention, in discussions of the social and political life of the twelfth-century Byzantine world.⁶⁴ Yet although these novels are clearly based on the ancient Greek novels of centuries before, they reshape and recreate the classical themes and plots in ways that reflect concerns and beliefs of a new time.

March, 2002

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⁶⁴ E.g. Laiou 211–212; Angold does not even mention them in his magisterial book on church and society under the Komnenian emperors (*supra* n.22), although the epic *Digenes Akrites* is well discussed.