Ninus and Metiochus in the school of rhetoric: the first Greek novels

REGLA FERNÁNDEZ-GARRIDO
Universidad de Huelva (CIPHCN)

The fragmentary novels *Ninus*[1] and *Parthenope*[2] belong within the category of "love novels" and share several features:

a) They can be considered "historical"[3] because their protagonists correspond to people who actually existed (we have information of them from historical sources such as Ctesias and Diodorus Siculus for *Ninus* and Herodotus for *Parthenope*[4]), although they are obviously fictional.
b) They are set in more or less remote times: *Parthenope* takes place in the 6th century BC, close to the setting of *Callirhoe,* while *Ninus* is in a more remote past.
c) These novels not only circulated in written form, but were also represented in mime and in mosaics as is evident from the testimony of Lucian (*On Dance*)[5]

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[1] The papyri of this novel are *PBerol.* 6926*, PGen.* 85, *PSI* 1305 and an ostracon, *OEdfu* 306. For editions and commentaries see Kussl 1991, 15-67; Stephens – Winkler 1995, 23-71; Kussl 1997; López Martínez 1998b,37-80.

[2] The papyri of this novel are *PBerol.*9588, *PBerol*. 7927 and *PBerol*. 21179, which belong to the same papyrus; *POxy* 435, *PMich.Inv.*3402v and an ostracon, *OBodl* 2722. For editions and commentaries, see Maehler 1976; Kussl 1991, 165-167; Stephens-Winkler 1995, 72-100; López Martínez 1998b*,* 121-144; 132; Alvares-Renner 2001; Hägg-Utas 2003, 23-45; López Martínez – Ruiz Montero 2016a, 2016b and 2021.

[3] About this category, see Hägg 2004, 73-98. For *Ninus*, see Billault 2004. See also Whitmarsh 2013, 11-34.

[4] Stephens – Winkler 1995, 24-26 and 79-80, respectively.

[5] Lucian (*De Salt.* 37-61) offers a catalogue of the contents of pantomime, ranging from the initial Chaos to the loves of Cleopatra. Among these, he points to some dramas set in Asia: in Samos, with the story (πάθος) of Polycrates and the wandering journeys (πλάνη) of his daughter Parthenope to the Persians, making clear reference to the novel *Parthenope*, which is also referred to in *Pseudol*. 25. See Ruiz Montero 2014, 613-614 and 2018a, 33-35. The popularity of *Parthenope* was pointed out earlier by Maehler 1976, 2-3, adding other testimonies.

and the mosaics from around AD 200 representing scenes from the two novels,[6] which were featured together in both modes of representation. The popularity and dissemination of both works can be attested to by the variety of formats in which they were transmitted.

d) They are close but probably prior to Chariton's novel,[7] with which they also share the title format, setting and characters inspired by history.[8]

One last feature they share is that their male protagonists deliver speeches with clear traces of school rhetoric. The five fully extant Greek novels are undoubtedly influenced by school rhetoric: patterns of some "preliminary exercises" (*progymnasmata*), especially the most productive for this genre, that is, "narrative" — διήγημα—, *ethopoeia* and *ekphrasis*;[9] similarly, clear influences of declamations (μελέται) are found in speeches in the novels.[10] This is one of the reasons why the genre has been held in greater esteem in recent times. These are works written by educated authors (*pepaideumenoi*) and targeted for a learned audience, "as products of and for the elite".[11]

Our aim in the following pages is the detailed analysis of two passages:

1) *PBerol.* 6926, from *Ninus*, the protagonist's speech in the presence of his aunt Derkeia, arguing that its organisation follows the recommendations of the treatise entitled *Art of Political Speech,* attributed to Anonymous Seguerianus; in this speech we can also identify several aspects of *stasis* theory by Hermogenes of Tarsus.
2) *PBerol.*7927, from *Parthenope,* where we shall analyse the refutation, in the words of Metiochus, of the traditional mythical narrative about the god Eros, which can be compared with the preliminary exercise called "refutation" (ἀνασκευή).[12]

Although some of the rhetorical treatises we are using for the analysis are later than the fragments of these novels, all of them inherit a previous tradition. In fact, the term *progymnasma* first occurs in the rhetorical handbook known as *Rhetoric*

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[6] For *Ninus*, see Quet 1992, 132-134, López Martínez 2019, 22; for a different interpretation of the mosaic images, quite speculative, as she herself acknowledges, see Trnka-Amrhein 2018, 38-43. As for *Parthenope,* see Quet 1992, 138-145, Hägg-Utas 2003, 58-64.

[7] "I primi romanzi che s'incontrano nei nostri frammenti", Cavallo 1996, 31.

[8] It has even been suggested that Chariton is also the author of *Ninus* (see below, n.18) and *Parthenope* (see below, n.47).

[9] Malosse 2011-2012, 189.

[10] For an overview on the subject see Hock 1997, 445-465.

[11] Whitmarsh 2008, 8.

[12] As has been stressed from Reitzenstein 1906, 167-168 onwards.

to Alexander (1436a25), probably written by Anaximenes of Lampsacus in the third quarter of the 4th century BC and traditionally attributed to Aristotle. The earliest *Progymnasmata* as such is the treatise by Theon, probably from the 1st century AD. The other remaining progymnasmatic works are a short handbook attributed to Hermogenes of Tarsus (2nd century AD); Aphthonius' treatise, the most influential one (second half of the 4th century AD); and Nicolaus of Myra's handbook (5th century AD).[13] The treatise known as Anonymous Seguerianus seems likely to date from the end of the 2nd century or around third century, but it also reflects a previous tradition.[14] Finally, Hermogenes' *On Issues* (2nd century AD) is the best-known and most influential work on the theory of argument. This theory goes back to Hermagoras of Temnos (2nd century BC), the most famous of the Hellenistic rhetorical theorists whose testimonies and fragments, unfortunately, are sparse.[15]

Our analysis also mentions both the love-related motifs found in these fragments, motifs that also occur in the five fully extant novels,[16] as well as the references to the previous literature.

Ninus

Ninus has a special position among the novel fragments for being the oldest and first published example of the genre.[17] There are different proposals about its authorship and date of composition.[18]

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[13] Kennedy 2003, XI-XIII.

[14] Dilts-Kennedy 1997, X-XIII.

[15] Fragments edited by Woerther 2012. See also Heath 1995, 19 and 2004, 4-10.

[16] See Létoublon 1993. Love motifs similar to those of the novel are found earlier in Greek and Latin literature, see Konstan 1994.

[17] Wilcken 1893.

[18] Stephens-Winkler (1995, 26-27) suggested that the author's homeland was Aphrodisias, and perhaps Chariton could have written both *Callirhoe* and *Ninus,* or another Aphrodiasian author of the same time could have written *Ninus* and they offered other possibilities. For other hypotheses on its authorship, see Morgan 1998, 3336-3337. In the same vein, Tilg (2010, 111-124) dated him to the period between the end of the 1st century BC and AD 75, leaning towards the period between AD 66 and 68, and locating him in Aphrodisias. On the contrary, Bowie (2002, 55-56) did not believe that Chariton was the author of *Ninus* for linguistic reasons and he also claimed that there was not enough basis to place the author of *Ninus* in an era prior to Chariton, but rather it should be placed after him. López Martínez (2017, 90 n. 5) proposed placing *Ninus* between 53 and 20 BC and she also suggested (pp. 92-93) that Nicolaus of Damascus (1st century BC), who served as Herod the Great's secretary, was its author. More recently, and recognising the significant speculative component of her hypothesis, López Martínez (2019, 27-28) has proposed that

The passage we are about to discuss belongs to *PBerol.* 6926,[19] which in turn contains two fragments. Fragment A consists of five columns and fragment B of three columns. Each column has 38 lines, each between 19 and 26 letters long, except for the fourth column of fragment A, which has 39 lines.[20] The text was written on the *recto*, which indicates that it was copied for its own value (as opposed to that of *Parthenope* col.2, see below p.11). The *verso* was reused for an accounting record dated AD 101, so that we have a *terminus ante quem* for the moment when the literary work was copied. According to Wilcken, the latest *terminus ante quem* for the production of the manuscript is the middle of the 1st century AD, but it can also be considerably older, from the end of the Ptolemaic period. Consequently, *Ninus* is the oldest novel that has survived.[21]

The first column of fragment A is highly damaged, which makes restoration difficult. However, we have a single male, which certainly refers to Ninus, and a female, ἡ παῖc, which probably refers to the female protagonist. We can read words such as "the intensely loving" (ὁ cφόδρα ἐρῶν, l.3), "danger" (κίν]δυνον, l. 6), "prayer" (εὐχῆc, l. 7), "hope" (ἐλπίδα, l. 8), "the accustomed modesty for women" (ἡ cυ̣νή[θηc ταῖc γυναι]ξὶν αἰδὼc, l. 9-10), "courage" (θάρcoc, l. 11), "would wander" (πλανήcεcθαι, l. 16), "unblemish" (ἀδιάφθ̣ορον, l. 18), "of Aphrodite" (Ἀφροδί̣]τηc, l. 19), "had sworn" (ὠμω̣]μόκει, l. 20), which are common in the novel genre and related to the adventures that its protagonists have to go through.

In contrast, the next four columns of fragment A are very well preserved. Of these, we will focus on the second, third and part of the fourth, containing Ninus' speech to his aunt Derkeia. In these lines, Ninus characterised himself in his own words: he is a young prince who has proved his courage as a warlord capable of leading a land-based military expedition. He is 17 years old and wishes to marry his cousin, so he asks his aunt for her daughter's hand. He presents himself as a conqueror who has come to claim something that has been promised to him, and

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it could have been written in Parthia in the middle of the 1st century BC by a Hellenized man extremely proficient in the Greek language. Whitmarsh (2018, 165 n. 28) is convinced "that the text as we have must be late Hellenistic or early imperial on the basis of linguistic features such as ἥμην at AIII.38".

[19] We will work with Stephens-Winkler's text and translation.

[20] See López Martínez 1998b, 37.

[21] Wilcken (1893, 164, 189-190) based his assumption in the shapes of the letters. And he stated (1893, 190): "Auf alle Fälle dürfte schon die Handschrift allein – denn aus dieser haben wir bisher nur unsere Schlüsse gezogen – es so gut wie sicher machen, dass Ninosroman älter ist als der des Antonius Diogenes nach Rohdes Ansatz, also überhaupt der älteste uns erhaltene Roman ist".

his speech can be compared with the declamation type of the ἀριστεύς who demands his reward, a scene reflected in the rhetorical handbooks.[22]

This type of speech belongs to the judicial genre, in which one party comes to file a suit against the other party. Claiming a possession, a reward, a punishment, an honour (for example, a priesthood) is very often the subject of declamations, as can be seen from the examples given by Hermogenes. In Ninus' speech, as is usual in the judicial genre, the following parts can be distinguished:[23]

1) Exordium (προοίμιον, col. A.1 l. 38 – col. A.II l. 8), beginning with an apostrophe to his aunt, his interlocutor,[24] and recalling his oath.[25]

2) "Narration" (διήγησις, col. A.II l. 8-35), of the "argumentative" type (κατασκευαστικόν, An. Seg. 140). This begins with a setting-out of the facts: his past triumphs (col. A.II, l. 9-13), which have given him sufficient power to enjoy himself with pleasures of any kind (col. A.II, l. 13-15), although he has not done so, preferring to remain chaste (ἀδιάφθορος, col. A.II, l. 18).[26]

The narration reflects the "virtues" (ἀρεταί) established for this part of the speech by the Anonymous Seguerianus (63) and by the *Progymnasmata* for the preliminary exercise of narrative (διήγημα): "brevity" (συντομία), "clarity" (σαφήνεια) and "credibility" (πιθανότης). The brevity lies in the facts (ἐν τοῖς πράγμασιν) and in the choice of words (ἐν ταῖς λέξεσι, Anon. Seg. 64). This narration is brief as regards the facts because it does not start too far back, it does not

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[22] See López Martínez 1998a, 54, n. 5, citing sources of this prototype, generally late Greek and older Roman ones. Earlier, Ruiz-Montero 1986, 141-142, referring to the publication of Russell's book *Greek Declamation*, points out the parallels between the Choricius of Gaza's declamation 5 ("The Young War-Hero") and this speech from Ninus.

[23] For an analysis of the judicial speeches of the Greek novels, see Schwartz 1998 and Fernández-Garrido, 2009.

[24] Whom he refers to as "mother" (μῆτερ) and he addresses twice during his speech, implicitly seeking her approval, see col. A.II l. 21-22: καθάπερ οἶσθας, and A.III l. 25: οἷον οἶσθας.

[25] He may be referring, as López Martínez (1998b, 75) says, to B 23-24; which is why she is inclined to place fragment B first. The oath to which Ninus refers is that of chastity and fidelity to his beloved, characteristic of the protagonists except in Chariton of Aphrodisias and Xenophon of Ephesus (see Ruiz-Montero 1996, 141).

[26] This term is used twice, in col. A.II, l. 18 and in l. 35; it is the last word of this part of the speech and therefore in a place of emphasis. The same can be said of the word ἀπόλαυσις, which appears in A.II, l. 16 and A.IV l. 2, associated in both cases with simple sexual enjoyment, with negative connotations. These feelings are far removed from the pretensions of Ninus, who only aspires to legal marriage with his cousin, sanctioned by the family and the kingdom. On the use of this term and others of similar meaning in this novel, see Kanavou 2016.

dwell on incidental matters, for example, by discussing his military victories to reinforce his power. It is also brief in style because it does not use synonyms[27] or add epithets to common nouns (Anon. Seg. 71); it also avoids repetition and periphrasis. It is clear because it is an exposition of the past and present facts, distinguishing the real and proven facts from what could have been but was not; the order of events is also clear: first facts are mentioned earlier and last facts are placed later. Like brevity, clarity also results from style (λέξις): in the narration there are no foreign or strange words;[28] there is a *tropos* (col. A. II l.25-26), but it does not affect the clarity.

A narration is credible if the speaker tries to make his words look plausible (Anon. Seg. 89); the Aristotelian concepts of *ethos* and *pathos* are mentioned among the resources for creating persuasiveness (An. Seg. 94). In this narration, Ninus presents himself as a master of many peoples, with almost absolute power, but he has restrained himself and remained chaste, displaying great virtue and therefore representing himself as a good and reliable person (Arist. *Rh*. 1356 to 6-8). The text also displays a considerable *pathos* and we can feel the agony and the paradox of Ninus' situation: despite his 17 years, already a man, he is only a child, a child sexually speaking, because of his intentionally preserved chastity. The credibility, which is not very apparent *a priori*, is the most carefully constructed aspect of this narration: how can a 17-year-old man with power over so many peoples remain chaste?[29] But in the world of novels, this chastity is not unlikely, not even among male characters. And Ninus is no exception, justifying his chastity due to his love for his cousin: he is victorious and powerful as far as military campaigns are concerned, but a prisoner (αἰ-]χμάλωτος) of love.[30] As for the six elements of any narrative (person, action, place, time, manner and cause), arguments are developed around the person (Ninus) and some of the topics relating to him: deeds, nature and age, not in the order in which they should be treated according to the *Progymnasmata*, but in the order in which Ninus considers them to be stronger arguments for his request. The narration closes with a transition to the next part (col. A.II l. 31-35), finishing off with an emphasis on the main arguments, with a rhetorical question.

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[27] The examples given by Anonymous Seguerianus (69) are "πυκνοὶ καὶ θαμέες", ἢ ξίφος καὶ μάχαιρα.

[28] There is no express mention of the god Eros in the sentence [ὑπὸ] τοῦ θεοῦ νικῶμαι (col. A. II l 19-20), but it is clear enough from the context.

[29] Leucippe's virginity is also questioned, although for totally opposing reasons (Ach. Tat. 6,21,3).

[30] There is a clear antithesis, evoking the literary motif of *servitium amoris* (Kussl 1991, 43, n. 57).

3) The presentation of evidence (col. A.II l. 36 – col. A.III l. 36), focused on the proofs (πίστεις). This part of the speech is mainly where the appropriate issue (στάσις) is introduced. Hermogenes of Tarsus proposes a division of the issues based on whether the act is clear or not. If it is not, we have the issue of "conjecture" (στοχασμός); if it is a clear and evident act, we must analyse whether it is incomplete or complete. In the first case, we will have the "definition" (ὅρος); in the second – clear and complete act – we must investigate the "quality" (ποιότης). The quality, in turn, is divided into "rational" (λογικαὶ στάσεις) and "legal" (νομικαὶ στάσεις) issues. Separate from the systematic classification, but no less important, is the issue of the "objection" (μετάληψις), which revolves around whether the issue should be admitted for proceedings (Hermogenes *Stat.* 36,6-43,7).[31]

In our opinion, the issue here is a legal one because the claim is concerned with a "verbal instrument" (περὶ ῥητὰ), that is, with "laws, decrees, correspondence, definite proclamations, and in short everything given verbal expression".[32] In this case, Ninus argues against "a law unwritten, one stupidly sanctioned by foolish convention" (νόμος οὐ γεγραμμένος, ἄλλως δὲ ἔθει φλυάρωι πληρούμενος, col. A.II l. 36-38) which prevents him from marrying his cousin: the Assyrian custom of not marrying girls until they are 15 years old.[33] According to Aristotle, "if the written law is counter to our case, we must have recourse to the general law and equity, as more in accordance with justice",[34] because equity remains constant and never changes, as does the general law, as it is based on nature (κατὰ φύσιν γάρ ἐστιν), whereas the written laws often change (*Rh*. 1375a31-33). In his speech, Ninus refutes an unwritten law by opposing it to nature, as general law, which is therefore immutable, the most beautiful law for such unions. We thus have the legal issue of "conflict of law" (ἀντινομία),[35] which constitutes, together with "ambiguity" (ἀμφιβολία), "letter and intent" (ῥητὸν καὶ

[31] For a very clear example of how this theory works, see Heath 1995, 21-22.

[32] Hermog. *Stat*. 40.1-2, Heath's translation.

[33] In the first two novels that have been preserved in full, those of Chariton and Xenophon, whose protagonists marry at the beginning of the novel, we also find obstacles to the wedding, which are later overcome. While all the novels' protagonists are noted for their youth, the youngest of all are the protagonists of *Ninus*, see Tilg 2010, 114-115 and previously Kussl 1991, 42 n. 52.

[34] ἐὰν μὲν ἐναντίος ᾖ ὁ γεγραμμένος τῷ πράγματι, τῷ κοινῷ χρηστέον καὶ τοῖς ἐπιεικεστέροις καὶ δικαιοτέροις (*Rh.* 1375a27-29), translation by Freese 1926.

[35] Posing it as a rhetorical question: what sensible person could deny that nature is the most beautiful law of such unions? (ὅτι δὲ ἡ φύσις τῶν τοιούτων συνόδων κάλλιστός ἐστι νόμος, τίς ἂν εὐ φρονῶν αντείποι; col. A.III l. 3-6). We also have the contrast φύσις/νόμος, so widely developed in Greek culture, see Morgan 1998, 3336 and Anderson 2009, 3.

διάνοια) and "assimilation" (cυλλογιcμός), the four legal issues described by Hermogenes of Tarsus (*Stat*. 40,20-42,4; 82,5-92,10). These issues can be considered equivalent to the four "legal questions" established previously by Hermagoras of Temnos.[36] It should be highlighted, however, that in this case the conflict is not between two legal texts as such, but between custom (unwritten law), and therefore not a legal text in the strict sense, and nature.

Ninus develops his argument on two levels. Firstly, as a "thesis" (θέcιc), one of the preliminary exercises:[37] Is it legal/natural to delay a young woman's wedding until she is 15 years old, even if she is ready to bear children beforehand? The answer is no, based on the very nature of women: at the age of 14, some women become pregnant and some have already given birth. Why, therefore, should Derkeia's daughter not marry? In other words, she would not be contradicting nature. Secondly, he gives his aunt a series of arguments recommending that the marriage should be moved ahead in his particular case, moving from "thesis" to "hypothesis" (ὑπόθεcιc). Knowing that this argument may not be convincing enough, since there would be no problem in waiting for a couple of years, Ninus, by using προκατάληψιc,[38] anticipates and refutes his aunt's arguments, namely that he should wait only two years, until the young woman turns 15 (col. A. III l. 13-26). He finishes this part of the presentation of evidence as he began, with the allusion to Fortune, using a ring structure.

4) The epilogue (col. A. III l. 36 – col. A.IV l. 13). In this part Ninus, aware that he could be labelled shameless (col. A. III l. 36-37), focuses on refuting this accusation. To do this, he uses the issue of "quality" (ποιότηc) and states what it is to be shameless, personifying it in himself to make it more credible (col. A. III l.37 – col. A.IV l.5) and showing that he has behaved in precisely the opposite way (col. A.IV l.5-13).

In this last part of his speech, the previous arguments are taken up again by way of recapitulation, a common practice in epilogues (Hermog. *Stat*. 52,11-14). The main function of the epilogues is "to influence the hearers favourably" (An. Seg. 208),[39] as Ninus tries to do with his aunt Derkeia, and as he did in the exordium. Recapitulation is defined as "a brief exposition of the headings or *epicheiremes* that have been previously discussed, or (...) a compact running over of the arguments spoken in detail earlier in order to remind the hearers of them" (An.

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[36] Woerther 2012, LXIX, 21-22; see also *Anon. Seg*. 188.

[37] Theon (69,14) notes that in every speech we can find "un point qui est une thèse" (θετικὸν κεφάλαιον, Patillon's translation 1997).

[38] Anaximenes. *Ars Rhetorica.* 18,1-2, see López Martínez 1998a, 55.

[39] Dilt – Kennedy's translation. These words are assigned to Aristoteles' *Theodoctean Art*.

Seg. 208). This epilogue can be defined as a recapitulation by *stasis* (An. Seg. 216), because Ninus defines what it is to be shameless and what it is not, so that he sets out arguments relating to the issue (cτάcιc) of "definition" (ὅροc).

We can conclude, therefore, that Ninus has delivered a speech very well constructed according to the rules of rhetoric (as Wilcken pointed out),[40] not only for its *inventio* and *dispositio*, but also for its *elocutio,* for its style and the rhythmic clauses that structure it.[41] We can highlight the most significant tropes and figures: polyptoton (col. A.III l. 21-22); rhetorical questions (col. A.II l. 30-31, l. 33-35, col. A.III l. 3-6); parallel structures: two-member structures (col. A.II l. 1-3, l. 8-13, l.28-29), ascending tricolon (col. A.II l. 37 – A.IV l. 5); repetitions of terms that evoke important concepts in the speech, with the result of emphasising these concepts: ἀδιάφθοροc (col. A.II l. 18, l. 35) and ἀπόλαυcιc (col. A.II l. 15, col. A.IV l.2). These terms contrast Ninus' chastity with the sexual enjoyment which could be expected of him given his age and his situation of power, and Ninus' paradox is highlighted: conqueror of many peoples but conquered by love, an adult by his age and his military campaigns but a child (παῖc ... νήπιοc)[42] by his experience of love. For all this, Ninus brings together the most important traits of the novel's protagonists: chastity and virginity. The temporal adverb νῦν (as many as four times, col. A.II l. 8, l. 17, l. 24, l. 27) and the verb cπευcάτω (in anaphora in a tricolon increasing in number of syllables, col. A.III l. 26-30) are also repeated, insisting on the urgency of the wedding. This emphasis is evidence of another *topos* of the novel: love can only be fully lived within marriage, a legitimate marriage, blessed by the family and, in this case, also by the people.[43] In his speech Ninus uses an appropriate expression (λέξιc) because it expresses emotion and corresponds to his character and to the topic he is dealing with (Arist. *Rh*. 1308a9-10) and probably he succeeds in his request because "his words to Derkeia fell on willing ears" (ταῦτα πρὸc βουλομένην ἔλεγε τὴν Δερκείαν col. A.IV l. 13-15).

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[40] Wilcken 1893, 179.

[41] Jenistová 1953, 214 pointed out the recurrence of clauses of dicretic, ditrochee and cretic-trochee rhythm. More recently, the prosodic analysis has been extended and examined in greater detail by Artés 2018.

[42] This structure is found in Homer, *Il.* 22,484 and 24,726 (with reference to Astyanax, from Andromache's mouth), at *Od*. 4,32 and 21,95. Also in Eur. *Andr*. 755 and *Ion* 43, and in historical texts, such as Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus or Dionysius of Halicarnassus.

[43] As in Chariton's novel, in which the marriage of Chaireas and Callirhoe is requested by the assembly of the Syracusan people (1.2.11-12).

With this speech, Ninus, an Assyrian prince, shows himself as well educated in Greek *paideia* (πεπαιδευμένος) despite his youth, with mastery of λόγος.[44] In sharp contrast to Ninus, the narrator introduces us to the maiden (κόρη),[45] perhaps Semiramis,[46] a girl so shy and demure that she is incapable of articulating a word in the presence of her aunt Thambe and defending before her the same position as Ninus has.

Parthenope

Parthenope is thought to date to the beginning of the 1st century AD,[47] probably prior to Chariton. The papyri preserving this novel date from the first half of the 2nd century AD to the 3rd century AD.[48] Moreover, we have two other useful testimonies for this novel. The more interesting is *The Virgin and her Lover*, a Neo-Persian poem by ʻUnsurī composed in AD 1040, as well as many quotations from later Persian texts.[49] Nearly 400 verses are preserved of the poem, which are extremely useful for the reconstruction of the novel's plot. We also have the testimony of a Coptic codex dated around the 9th-10th centuries with the remains of the martyrdom narrative of a saint called Parthenope,[50] who, as her name clearly suggests, lost her life for defending her virtue.

Parthenope presents the typical formula of the genre. However, it seems that it is the female protagonist who goes in search of her lover, which is probably the reason for its title. Not all scholars accept that this novel had the compulsory happy ending of the genre,[51] especially because of Parthenope's martyrdom.

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[44] See Stephens-Winkler 1995, 23, López Martínez 1998a, 56, and Anderson 2009, 3.

[45] She is not even mentioned by name, but is referred to as ἡ κόρη, ἡ παῖς, ἡ παρθένος, which is very striking because all Greek novel heroines have a name.

[46] Or maybe not, see Whitmarsh 2018, 165-168.

[47] López Martínez 1998b, 139. Stephens-Winkler 1995, 81 state that it must have been written no later than the 1st century AD, before Lucian's dialogues, perhaps quite before if by Lucian's time it has become a theme for theatrical performances. Based on its language and on its literary character, Dihle (1978,54) suggests to consider it rather a text of Hellenistic, before Atticism, than Imperial origin. Tilg (2010, 94-105) states that, on paleographical grounds, it could have been written before, at the same time of after *Callirhoe*; however, it is so close in character, language and style to *Callirhoe* that he suggests that Chariton himself is the author of *Parthenope*, a thesis already considered by other scholars.

[48] Cavallo 1996, 31-32; López Martínez – Ruiz-Montero 2021, 2.

[49] Hägg-Utas 2003, 76-186.

[50] Ruiz-Montero 2018b.

[51] For example, Hägg – Utas 2009, 172.

The text we are going to analyse is the second column of *PBerol*.7927, which is written, like the other two fragments belonging to the same papyrus, on the *verso*, on the back of an account of rents. Our text belongs to Metiochus' speech on Eros,[52] in the following context: during the symposium held by Polycrates of Samos in honour of Metiochus, who has sought refuge in the court of Samos, Anaximenes by chance proposes an "inquiry" (ζήτηcιc).[53] Polycrates has seated Metiochus near his daughter Parthenope, who is also attending the banquet, so we have a more Homeric than Platonic setting,[54] with the parallel of Achilles Tatius, where we have the two protagonists sharing a banquet and a table. We do not know if the fragment specifies that Anaximenes chose a theme about love (in the sense of ἐρωτικὸc λόγοc).[55] If the theme was love, the reason for this choice could have been that Anaximenes had realised that Metiochus and Parthenope were in love, like Calasiris in Heliodorus' novel (3,5,5; 10,4; 17,2).[56] In fact, the Persian text says that Anaximenes wants to provoke Metiochus to "get from him words about his love, all its roots and branches".[57]

The primary narrator introduces Metiochus' speech and points to his claim to be ignorant of the matter of διάλεξιc: "professing (to not have a)... reasonable or proper knowledge" (l. 4-5); Metiochus is probably trying to win the favour of the audience using the cliché of false modesty, if we consider how confidently he tackles his refutation. διάλεξιc is an informal preliminary talk, "a sort of conversational chat, quite distinct from the formal rhetorical *logos*". It has a syntactically simple form, with short sentences (ἀφελὴc λόγοc), and it has recourse to "anecdotes, elaborate comparisons and witty allusions to the classics".[58] Metiochus develops this informal talk following the patterns of the preliminary exercise of "refutation" (ἀνακκευή) of a mythical narrative (διήγημα)[59] about Eros. Parthenope's

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[52] We are using López Martínez – Ruiz Montero's text and translation, 2021.

[53] It is used in this sense in philosophical contexts, see Arist. *EN* 1112b22 and 1142b14, but also in rhetorical contexts, as Hägg-Utas 2003, 28 n. 14 pointed out.

[54] Hägg-Utas 2009, 156, quoting Kussl 1991, 167, n. 71.

[55] See Laserre 1944, 171.

[56] See López Martínez – Ruiz Montero 2021, 8. The words λαβ[όντεc] [c.10]οὐ πάθουc ἀνάμνηcιν l. 2-3, could refer to this feeling.

[57] Hägg-Utas 2009, 155.

[58] Russell 1983, 77-78.

[59] Narrative is defined as "language descriptive of things that have happened or as though they had happened" (Theon 78.15-16, translation by Kennedy 2003). It is defined almost identically by Ps.Hermogenes 4, Aphthonius 2, Nicolaus 11-12. The progymnasmatic treatises, with the exception of Theon, establish a division within the narrative: mythical (μυθικόν), fictitious (πλαcματικόν) – also called dramatic (δραματικόν) -, historical (ἱcτορικόν) and political or private (πολιτικὸν ἢ ἰδιωτικόν). Ps.Hermog. 4,17, Nicol. 12-13; Aphthonius 2,19-22 distinguished only three: dramatic or fictitious, historic and political. See Valdés 2011, 96-98, with a very clear summary table.

speech follows (only three lines from the beginning are preserved), a "confirmation" (κατασκευή) of the mythical narrative. In Libanius, we find examples of confirmation and refutation, all concerning the Homeric poems.[60]

As a progymnasmatic exercise, refutation is parallel to confirmation. Both of them are treated as one exercise by Ps. Hermogenes and Nicolaus of Myra, as two different exercises by Aphthonius, and as a skill applicable to other exercises by Theon.[61] It was thought that refutation, when applied incorrectly to narratives that everyone should or could believe, could be a waste of time for the speaker and could even damage his reputation. Refutations and confirmations, therefore, should be made when there was room for debate (Ps. Herm. 11, Aphth. 10,13; Nicol. 21-22, 29-30).

The refutation aims to undermine the most important virtue (ἀρετή)[62] of the narratives: their "credibility" (πιθανότης), which is even more important in mythical narratives, the easiest type to refute (see Theon's examples**,** 94,12-96,14) because they do not deserve unquestioned credibility and are suspected of falsehood (Nicol. 12,19-21).

This mythical narrative is as follows:[63] "[Eros] is Aphrodite's son and quite young, having [wings] and a bow hung on his back and holding a torch [in his hand], and that with these weapons he (cruelly) … wounds the souls of the [young]" (l. 8-13).[64]

This mythical narrative about Eros corresponds to that which would be told by those following the most ancient mythological tradition, criticised by Metiochus as "fools" (βωμολόχοι),[65] so that he is already anticipating the direction his refutation is likely to take. He states that accepting the traditional mythical narrative about Eros would be "ridiculous" (γέλωc, l. 13).

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[60] See Gibson 2008, 107-139.

[61] He speaks of the refutation of the *chreias*, the fables, the historical and legendary narratives, the theses and the laws (65,20-23).

[62] As has already been stated (see above p. 5), the other two virtues of any narrative (διήγημα) /narration (διήγηcιc) are "clarity" (caφήνεια) and "conciseness" (cυντομία), Theon 79-81.

[63] Among the most beautiful examples of mythical narratives, Theon cites the birth of Eros in *Smp.* 203b (66,18-19).

[64] This representation of Eros is common in the novel genre, see Maehler 1976, 16 n. 35, citing Longus 1,7,1; 2,6,1; Ach.Tat. 1,1,13; 2,4,5-5,2; 4,7,3 and Hld. 4,2,3; 9,11,5-6.

[65] A contemptuous term, which occurs in comedy, applied to lawyers (τιc βωμόλοχοc ξυνήγορος Ar.*Eq*.1358, see *Ra*.1085, 1521; it also occurs in Arist. *EN* 1108 a 25). Metiochus specifies to whom he is referring: "(all those) who, uninitiated in true education, adhere to old tales that [Eros]…", l. 7-8.

As we have already said, the most important virtue of a narrative, especially if it is mythical, is credibility. Therefore, the *topos* of the incredible can be used for refutation.[66] Theon elaborates on the incredible in regard to the refutation of the fable: when actions or words are possible, but not plausible, due either to the person to whom the action or word is attributed; to the place where something is said to have happened or been said; to the time at which something is said to have happened or been said; or to the reason or manner (Theon 76,34-77,9).[67] Therefore, as Theon says, if we refute the narrative from the basis of incredulity, we thus demonstrate the incredibility of all the narrative's elements.[68] In this case, Metiochus focuses on two elements: the person's nature: an eternal childhood is implausible (l. 13-19); and the action: it is "completely incredible" (παντελῶc ἀπίθαν̣ο̣[ν, l. 20) that the person of Eros could fly around the world shooting arrows at those who opposed him and inflaming their souls with love (l. 21-25).

This refutation of the mythical narrative leads us to the rationalisation[69] of this myth, as anticipated in the introductory part of the speech, where the fools, uninitiated in true education but following the ancient myths, were criticised. Consequently, Metiochus' words end with a rational definition of love: "Eros is [rather] an agitation of the mind occasioned by beauty and increased with familiarity" (l. 27-29).[70] It is definitely λόγοc versus μῦθοc.[71]

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[66] Along with the "inexpedient" (ἀcύμφερον). The topics of the "false" (ψευδέc) and the "impossible" (ἀδύνατον) are also suitable, see Theon 76,18-25.

[67] That is, by any of the constitutive elements of the fable, which are the same as those of the narrative. On the refutation of these elements in the narrative, see Theon 94,6-11.

[68] Theon uses the example of Medea (94,10-95,2), adding that the same *topoi* are adapted to the mythical narratives of poets and historians about gods and heroes (e.g. this case, where we have a god).

[69] See the example given by Theon from Herodotus, regarding the historian's interpretation of the narrative of the two doves (2,55-57); or the rational interpretation in the Platonic *Phaedrus* of the myth of Boreas and Orithyia (Ephorus *FGrH* II 70,31 F or Palephatus, Theon 95,2-96,14).

[70] These two stages of love also appear in Charito 5,9,9, even using the same terms (κάλλοc, cυνήθεια, Hägg-Utas 2003, 29 n.22). Hägg-Utas (2009, 159-161) say that "[t]he novelist thus lets his hero avoid the commonplace of Eros as an illness", a commonplace we find in some sources; instead, "Metiochus argues for love as a psychological process", and they cite as the closest parallel the Ps. Seneca *Octavia*.

[71] The parallel drawn by Dostalová 1991, 35 is very interesting.

We can find philosophical texts as hypotexts for this speech:[72] Plato's *Symposium* in Eros' characterisation[73] and the holy breath (ἱερὸν πνεῦμα) of Love;[74] Aristotle's *Ethica Nicomachea,* e.g. 1128 a5, where we find γέλωc occurring with φορτικοί and βωμόλοχοc.[75] Other clear hypotexts are speeches on love (ἐρωτικοὶ λόγοι), especially in a symposium setting (as in this example), which become widespread from the 4th century BC.[76] Their clearest and best known precursors are in the Platonic *Symposium* and *Phaedrus.*[77] According to Quintilian (2,24,26), the subject of these speeches, which belong to the epideictic category, is a typical theme of school exercises.[78] It also has parallels in other novels, for example in Achilles Tatius 1,8-10 (about heterosexual or homosexual love, see Ps. Lucian, *Amores* 28). The portrayal of Eros as a child (βρέφοc) is, additionally, a topic in Greek novels (Xen. Eph. 1,8,2, Longus 2,3,1-2,5,5, Ach. Tat. 1,1,13) and perhaps this text can be seen as a hypotext for later novels, as suggested by Hägg-Utas,[79] a thesis we support although it is also met with some opposition.[80] The novelistic hero boasting of not having experienced love also occurs in Habrocomes, at the beginning of Xenophon of Ephesus' novel (1,1,5-6).

Metiochus tries to bring his speech to a close, but Anaximenes turns to Parthenope for a reply. Only the beginning of her speech is preserved, but from the

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[72] For an overview of intertextuality in the ancient novel, see Morgan – Harrison 2008 and Doulamis 2011.

[73] The Platonic discourse of Phaedrus emphasises that Eros is the oldest of the gods (τὸ γὰρ ἐν τοῖc πρεcβύτατον εἶναι τὸν θεόν, *Smp*. 178a9-b1), and Agathon says that he is the youngest of the gods and ever young (νεώτατον θεῶν καὶ ἀεὶ νέον, *Smp*. 195b6-c1), see Hägg-Utas 2009, 157 and López Martínez – Ruiz Montero 2021, 11. The combination of the primeval origin of Eros (the cosmogonic Eros) with his childish character is found later in Philetas' speech (Longus 2,5,2).

[74] Hägg-Utas 2009, 29, n. 20 say that Eros' πνεῦμα is a *topos* from Plato (*Smp*. 179b, *Phdr*. 255c) onwards, quoting bibliography; the lover of the young man is described as ἔνθεοc as he is possessed by the god (*Smp*. 180b4).

[75] They also occur together in comic fragments: φορτικὸν γέλωτα Com. Adesp.644. According to LSJ these adjectives are opposed to πεπαιδευμένοc (Arist. *Pol.*1342a20) and to οἱ χαρίεντεc (Arist. *EN* 1095b16).

[76] See Sánchez Llopis 1985.

[77] See Lasserre 1944.

[78] See Hägg – Utas 2009, 28 n. 18, quoting parallels with Middle comedy and Roman elegy. Similarly, Stramaglia, 1996.

[79] They do not rule out the possibility that Ach.Tat. 1,1,13 made a direct reference to *Parthenope* as a well-known predecessor in the novel genre, adding other similarities between the two novels. They also note that the very fact that this fragment about the banquet was copied on the *verso* of a papyrus that on its *recto* contains a document of an economic transaction may indicate that this was a favourite passage of a famous novel (see Hägg-Utas 2009, 170-172).

[80] See Bowie 2002, 53.

text we can deduce that she is going to provide confirmation of the traditional mythical narrative on Eros. The narrator tells us that Parthenope is angry because Metiochus has recognised that he has not fallen in love and hopes he never will.[81]

Concluding remarks

From the detailed analysis of the passages of *Ninus* and *Parthenope*, corresponding to Ninus' speech in front of his aunt Derkeia and the refutation of the mythical narrative on Eros by Metiochus, respectively, it is clear that the school rhetoric component of the novel goes back to the beginnings of the genre. Even though we have studied texts from novels that are only fragmentarily preserved, we have found evidence that their authors used the same school rhetoric resources we find in the later fully extant novels. Metiochus' refutation of the mythical narrative on Eros conforms to what is described in the *Progymnasmata* concerning this preliminary exercise. Ninus' speech presents the usual structure of any judicial speech and develops the relevant *staseis* in accordance with the theory that has been preserved through the treatise of Hermogenes of Tarsus. It should be noted, however, that we are not dealing with school exercises, but with texts of novels, and there is no automatic reproduction of the patterns established by the handbooks, which are only a guide for the speaker or writer and not strict rules that restrain their creative freedom. We have thus pointed out how the rhetorical theory is adapted to the context and the purpose being pursued. For example, in the narration of Ninus' speech and as far as the six elements of the narrative are concerned (person, action, place, time, manner and cause), only the element of person is amplified, developing just some of the topics relating to him/her (deeds, nature and age), and not in the order in which they should be treated according to the *Progymnasmata*, but in the order in which Ninus considers them to be stronger arguments for his request. Similarly, the issue (στάσις) addressed in the presentation of evidence is a legal one (νομική), the issue of "conflict of law" (ἀντινομία), but it is not handled in the way recommended by Hermogenes, because the conflict is not between two legal texts as such, but between custom (unwritten law), and therefore not a legal text in the strict sense, and nature. Likewise, the refutation of the mythical narrative on Eros is made by Metiochus using the *topos* of the incredible, but it does not demonstrate the incredibility of all the six narrative's elements, but focuses only on the person's nature and the action.

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[81] Regarding Parthenope's reply, Hägg-Utas (2009, 170) point out that the image of Eros she gives is exactly the one we find in Charito 4,7,6, X.Eph. 1,8.2-3, Longus 3,7, Ach.Tat. 1,1,13 and Hld. 4,2,3.

The style and language of both speeches also reflect the educated character of the male protagonists, especially Ninus, whose rhetorical skills contrast with the attitude of the female character who is not capable of pronouncing a word. In contrast, Parthenope does show oratorical skills, as can be deduced from the beginning of her speech responding to Metiochus and confirming the myth, before the text is interrupted. Ninus' rhetorical ability is superior to that of other male protagonists in novels such as Habrocomes or Theagenes. It could be compared to the rhetorical ability of Chaireas at the end of *Callirhoe*[82] or even to that of the more innocent Daphnis.[83] Clitophon, however, is without any doubt the most rhetorically gifted protagonist of the whole novel genre, and *Leucippe and Clitophon* the most rhetorical novel of all those preserved.[84]

Metiochus' refutation is not as rhetorical as Ninus' speech, since it belongs to an earlier level of *paideia*, the preliminary exercise, and is considered a *dialexis*, simpler than *melete*. Nevertheless, we have also cited important philosophical hypotexts.

In the two texts analysed, we have also highlighted love motifs, which will also find in later novels: in Ninus' speech we find the love oath, the chastity and virginity of both young lovers, legitimate marriage as goal (τέλος) of love, and the slavery of love. In Metiochus' refutation of Eros as a winged-boy-god in a symposium setting we have underlined the symptoms of love, love as a disease or as a psychological state of mind, Eros' image as a winged god, and the young protagonist who boasts of rejecting love.[85]

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[82] When he delivers a harangue in front of his soldiers, for example, in Charito 7,3,2-3.

[83] In his agon with Dorcon (Longus 1,15,4-16,5), or in his defence speech for the loss of the boat of the youngsters from Methymna (Longus 2,14,3-17,3, see Fernández-Garrido 2009, 469).

[84] Among the female characters, Chariclea, the protagonist of Heliodorus' *Ethiopian Story*, certainly deserves mention.

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