

Anna Lefteratou

Mythological Narratives

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Anna Lefteratou

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The Bold and Faithful Heroines of the Greek Novel

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Στον πατέρα μου, Σπύρο

Preface and Acknowledgements

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Throughout this book I have used the following editions: for Chariton, Reardon (2004b); for Xenophon of Ephesus, O'Sullivan (2005); for Achilles Tatius, Garnaud (1991); for Longus, Morgan (2004); for Heliodorus, Rattenbury, Lumb, and Maillon (2003 [1935]); for the fragmentary novels, Stephens and Winkler (1995). I have adopted the Latinate spelling of Greek names and modified translations and citations accordingly. For Chariton's, Xenophon's, Achilles Tatius', and Heliodorus' novels I have used the translations from Reardon (2008 [1989]), slightly adapted; for Longus' novel I have used Morgan (2004). Translations of other texts, unless otherwise stated, are mine. In the analysis I cite both the English and the Latin names of Authors and Works; in the footnotes and in

the Index I use the abbreviations of *LSJ*. Discussion of folktale material is facilitated by reference to ‘Aarne-Thompson’ (AT) Tale Types, *The types of the Folktale*, 1910, translated and enlarged by Stith Thompson, 1961 and expanded by Hans-Jörg Uther as *The Types of International Folktales*, 2004.

This book is dedicated to my father, Spyros Lefteratos, the first reader of my first sci-fi novels, when at the elementary school, and the one who bought me, as soon as I could read, the complete Children’s Greek Mythology – the best birthday-present ever!

Anna Lefteratou,
(CRC EDRIS, University of Göttingen-Heidelberg University)

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Introduction

La signification, est tout entière dans la relation dynamique qui fonde simultanément plusieurs mythes ou parties d'un même mythe, et sous l'effet de laquelle ces mythes, et ces parties, sont promus à l'existence rationnelle, et s'accomplissent ensemble comme les paires opposables d'un même groupe de transformations.

(Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Le cru et le cuit*, 23.¹)

Women's Tales

In one of the first paragraphs of Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon*, the reader encounters one of the most extensive and illuminating lists of mythical *exempla* in the five complete surviving Greek novels. The conversation evolves around one of men's favourite topics: women, beautiful women. The protagonist, Clitophon, is talking about Eros with his friends Clinias and Charicles, when, in an attempt to dissuade his lover, Charicles, from marrying, Clinias bewails the calamities that await a man who desires a woman. Clinias' line of argument is based not on his own experience or that of another person, but – to the great amazement of the modern reader, although probably not of the ancient – on mythology:

1.8.3–7: 'Pity the prospective groom, it looks as if they're sending him off to war.' If you were uninstructed in the examples of poetry (μουσικῆς), you would not know of the plays (γυναικῶν δράματα) involving women, but as it is you could tell others how many *mythic tales* women have contributed to the stage (ὅσων ἐνέπλησαν μύθων γυναῖκες τὴν σκηνήν): Eriphyle's necklace, Philomela's banquet, Stheneboea's slander, Aerope's theft, Procne's slaughter. Agamemnon desires the beautiful Chryseis, and it brings a plague on the Greeks. Achilles desires the beautiful Briseis and introduces himself to sorrow. If Candaules' wife is fair, yet this same wife kills Candaules. The fiery torch, lit for Helen's marriage, lit another fire hurled against Troy. The wedding of the chaste Penelope was the death of how many suitors? Phaedra loved Hippolytus and killed him; Clytemnestra hated Agamemnon and killed him. Oh women, women, they stop at nothing! They kill when they love, they kill when they don't love ... and so much one could say about the beautiful ones, for beauty does offer some consolation in the midst of calamity, a stroke of luck in a losing streak. But if, as you say, she is not even pretty, it is a catastrophe redoubled.²

¹ De Heusch 1965, 689–690, 'Vers une mytho-logique', on Lévi-Strauss' *Le cru et le cuit*, comments on the author's attempt to rationalise mythical thought as a 'notion logico-mathématique'. This book is also inspired by the logic found in mythical tales and Lévi-Strauss' mytho-logical grammar, but does not propose an anthropological study of the novel.

² The translations are from Reardon 2008 (1989), slightly adapted, unless otherwise stated.

Clinias' enumeration is a compilation of tales about sex and blood, about 'those bold and beautiful' women of Greek myth, who were famous for the disastrous results of their love affairs. Having recently, and for the first time, been in 'love at first sight' with the exceptionally beautiful Leucippe, Clitophon listens reluctantly to his cousin's mythical catalogue, for Clitophon takes a very different view on erotic matters. Later, during what might nowadays be called a 'candlelight dinner', and despite the presence of the whole family at the table, Clitophon and Leucippe listen to a song that creates a romantic atmosphere:

1.5.5–7: The song was Apollo's complaint at Daphne's running away from him, his pursuing and almost capturing her, how she was transformed into a tree and he wove her leaves into a wreath for him ... so I (Clitophon) said to myself: 'Look here, Apollo himself loves a virgin (ἐρᾷ παρθένου), unashamed of his love he pursues (δίδωκει) her while you hesitate, you blush, and exhibit an untimely self-control (σωφρονεῖς). Are you better than a god?'

Clitophon here summarises briefly the basic storyline of the well-known metamorphosis tale but emphasises desire and not violence. What Clitophon sees as the main commonalities between the myth and his own story are the male desire for a virgin (ἐρᾷ παρθένου) and the urge to pursue her in order to assuage that desire (δίδωκει). What better example could illustrate Clitophon's burning heart? However, this is not an ideal love story but one of rape and metamorphosis that does not fit the prerequisites of ideal romance.³ Both Clitophon and Clinias use tales from mythology to address their own fictional lives, without regard to the different categories of myth (metamorphosis myths, myths from epic, myths from the stage, tales from historiography) but purely on the basis of their broader theme, women and Eros.⁴

Surprisingly, neither of these mythical programmatic paradigms – neither the contra- nor the pro-women – is meant to come true, and none is mirrored entirely in the plot: a few pages later, Clinias' lover dies while riding a horse that was a gift from his boyfriend, and Clitophon, despite pursuing and eloping with Leucippe,

³ Cf. the metamorphosis myths as contrasting Chloe's tale in Longus as discussed by Morgan 2004a, 7–10.

⁴ In Clinias' examples above the major intertexts are the following: in Sophocles *Eriphyle* the heroine caused the death of her husband Amphiaraus after, her lover, bribed her with a lovely necklace. Philomela and Procne figure in Sophocles' now lost drama *Tereus*; Aerope, wife of Atreus, stole the golden lamb and gave it to her lover Thyestes, figured in the now lost eponymous plays of Agathon and of Carcinus. Sthenoboea is the adulteress in Euripides' *Bellerophon*. Chryseis and Briseis were the cause of the dispute between Agamemnon and Achilles in the *Iliad*; Helen and Penelope have, since Homer, been the embodiments of the adulteress and the chaste wife; Candaules' wife figures in Hdt. 1.8.1. Phaedra figures in the surviving Euripides' *Hippolytoi* and Clytemnestra in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*.

does not have sex with her until their actual marriage at the very end of the novel. Male love proves to be as perilous as heterosexual for Charicles, and Clitophon's desire for Leucippe is not as destructive as Apollo's desire for Daphne. Indeed, the story for which Clitophon and Leucippe are casting is not mythical but a novel, a tale whose main ingredient is the mutual *coup de foudre* of the two heterosexual protagonists in the beginning and their happy reunion in the end. Achilles Tatius, writing around the mid-second century CE and approximately 100 years after the 'first' novel, ought to have been aware of the generic constraints of the kind of story he is telling, which included, love, adventure, chastity, and marriage.⁵

The excerpt from Achilles Tatius above does not show the affinities of the novelistic story⁶ with myth but, rather, how broadly the term 'myth' relates to the plot of the Greek novels. Most of Clinias' myths were associated with particular texts, but these were not always explicit. For a myth was a story that was not necessarily thought to belong to one genre but to a broader system of mythical vulgate. In the imperial times there was an ongoing dialogue between higher and lower genres and media, most of which dealt with myth in one way or another. The myths that Ps.-Apollodorus knew were transmitted through a set of texts already considered 'classical' and 'canonical', such as Homer or the tragedians, but these myths were also available in other formats. We know for example that Euripides' tragedies circulated in the compact, reader-friendly form of summarised 'Tales'.⁷ Famous plays were still performed in some parts of the Empire but mime and pantomime further disseminated and adapted the well-known stories.⁸ The visual arts made ample use of traditional myths as well, bringing them to anyone who had eyes to see. The opening up of myth so as to include a wide variety of tales made Greek myth the *lingua franca* among the elite, who used it to discuss not only literary but everyday topics. This common mythical 'cultural currency',⁹ or mythical vulgate, was shared among those with a solid background in Greek *paideia* and who, would have frequented at least the school of the grammarian, if not of rhetoric. The breadth therefore of the mythical vulgate suggests that it is impossible to deduce the 'birth' of the novel from one or another kind of myth, or indeed a myth-related genre, but an overview of the variety of sources and media.

⁵ See, e.g., Chew 2014.

⁶ The term 'novelistic' here means 'proper to the genre of the Greek novel'. See Bowie 2008, 15 and De Temmerman 2014, 2 'novelistic fiction'.

⁷ Cf. The full title is Dicaearchus, 'Hypotheseis/Tales of/from Sophocles' and Euripides' myths'. It may also be, as Rusten 1987 argues, that these 'tales' were composed in the first two centuries CE and falsely attributed to Dicaearchus, which strengthens my suggestion that imperial audiences extensively read the popularised and summarised versions of epic and drama.

⁸ On dramatic performances see Jones 1993, on mime and pantomime see Hall 2013b.

⁹ The term in Cameron 2004, 221.

On the other hand, Clinias' and Clitophon's mythical analogues imply that the available mythical vulgate was slightly problematic for the new genre. Despite the opening of the mythical as a category to include all possible erotic tales, Greek myth was unable to provide the novel with such a thing as a tale of mutually faithful love that ends happily. Had Euripides' *Andromeda* survived, we might have witnessed an antecedent of such a tale, since the play apparently opens with Perseus' *coup de foudre* and ends with his marriage to the Ethiopian princess.¹⁰ However, besides this fairytale-like couple, none of the more successfully-married mythical chaste celebrities, such as Penelope and Alcestis, are in the bloom of youth. Nor do these domesticated heroines travel extensively, like the female characters encountered in the novel or the unfaithful but volatile Helen.¹¹ Nor does New Comedy provide a crystal-clear ideal of chaste heterosexual love, and rape, instead of mutual love at first sight, was often the reason to marry the girl.¹² Nor is Hellenistic poetry characterised by such an obsession with mutual love and chastity, with the possible exception of the story of 'Acontius and Cydippe', which indeed focuses on mutual desire, but not on virginity and even less so on adventure.¹³

Clitophon then requires all his rhetorical skill to convert the popular myths of seduction and rape into 'romantic tales', so as to fit his presumably 'ideal' love for Leucippe. Thus, Clinias' list of 'bold and beautiful' women should be re-labelled 'bold, beautiful *and faithful*' to correspond to the novelistic heroines. The effect is

10 Aélion 1988, 183, Gibert 1999 (2000), and Wyles 2007, 178. For Euripides' interest in romantic young couple-love see Trenkner 1958, 57, listing *Andromeda*, *Antigone*, *Helen*, *Meleager*, and *Oenomaus*.

11 Penelope welcomes Odysseus after 20 years of absence; Euripides has Alcestis sacrifice herself after bearing Admetus two children.

12 For rape see Rosivach 1998, 41. For New Comedy and the novel see Corbato 1968, Borgogno 1971, Crismani 1997, Lowe 2000, and most importantly Brethes 2007. An update of relevant scholarship is Létoublon and Genre 2014, 354–56. There may be structural similarities between New Comedy and the Greek love novel, but the ideal of love represented in each is diametrically different, since the couple achieves a happy ending by their own means and not as part of some family arrangement. Rape and producing children outside wedlock were common 'love plots' in some plays, e.g. Men. *Sam.*, Ter. *Eun.*, Plaut. *Cist.*, for which see Pierce 1994.

13 The ties with Hellenistic lore were emphasised by Rohde 1960 (1876) and Lavagnini 1921. It may be that 'Acontius and Cydippe', has *a posteriori* some of the characteristic elements of the novelistic love scenario as argued by Rosenmeyer 2001, 111, but this is, as it stands, a unique case. Also, a large number of pre- or Hellenistic lovestories do not contain many 'ideal' love scenarios, e.g. Antimachus' *Lyde* or Hermesianax' *Leontion*, for which see Gutzwiller 2007, 46. For a review of erotic pre-novel literature as not directly relevant to the kind of love scenario in the novels see also Konstan 1994, 139–88, especially his observations regarding New Comedy, epic, and tragedy.

somewhat like what the Orpheus and Eurydice myth does for Mozart's opera, *The Magic Flute* (1792), being programmatic for Pamina's and Tamino's ordeals in the underworld. And yet the libretto does not mention Orpheus but presumes that the audience can deduce it, because they are steeped in both classical literature and adaptations thereof, such as Gluck's *Orfeo* (1774) from 20 years earlier. Moreover, just as in the novel a mythical background serves to highlight the differences, rather than the similarities, between myth and the novelistic plot, the opera uses Orpheus' and Eurydice's unhappy saga as a negative analogue for the victorious and happy romance of Tamino and Pamina.¹⁴ In both cases the mythical erudition of the audience matters.

This book is about the use and function of myth in the five extant ideal Greek novels. These prose texts were written between the mid-first and the mid-fourth centuries CE; all tell of the erotic adventures of a girl-boy pair of lovers who are separated, tempted and threatened by other suitors before finding each other again.¹⁵ These are Chariton's *Callirhoe* (c. 50 CE), Xenophon's *Anthia and Habrocomes or Ephesiaca* (between 65 and 98 CE?), Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophon* (c. 150 CE), Longus' *Daphnis and Chloe or Lesbiaca* (c. 200CE?) and Heliodorus' *Chariclea and Theagenes or Aethiopica* (c. 350 CE).¹⁶ Mythology in the novel has long been thoroughly explored from a ritual and religious point of view; myths and their relevant intertexts have also been extensively analysed in recent years.¹⁷ And yet the religious, ritual, and intertextual approaches, because they tend to focus on the (socio-religious) origin(s) or the (literary) model(s) of the new genre, do not do justice to the complex role myth plays in it. In this analysis I will not investigate a particular mythical/literary genre but mythical tales that belong to the wider intertextual pool of imperial literature and whose popularity is well attested in literary as well as in visual sources.

As intertextual analysis shows, Homer's *Odyssey* and Euripides' so-called 'escape tragedies' and the *Hippolytus* were among the novelists' favoured myths.¹⁸ This is not surprising since both the epic and the dramatic poet were the two cor-

¹⁴ Van Den Berk 2004, 126.

¹⁵ I maintain the titles here that point to the girl-boy tale that was characteristic of the genre, as argued by Whitmarsh 2005a.

¹⁶ I follow here Bowie 2002 with the exception of Heliodorus. Bowie 2002 opts for a mid-third century dating for the *Aethiopica* but Morgan 1982, Chuvín 1990, 321–25, Bowersock 1994, 146, and Futre-Pinheiro 2014 suggest as more plausible the mid fourth century.

¹⁷ See below section on 'Myth'.

¹⁸ For the preponderance of Homeric and Euripidean intertextuality see Fusillo 1991 (1989). See also Bowersock 1994, Goldhill 2001, 11. On Homer and Euripides see Zeitlin 2001, Kim 2010, 7. For the reception of E. *IT* see Hall 2013a, 122. For details for each myth see the relevant chapters below. For the novel and tragedy see the overview in Billault 1998a.

nerstones of imperial Greek *paideia* and cultural identity. Besides, it is Homer and Euripides who are chiefly represented in the papyrological findings.¹⁹ It has long been acknowledged that Homer's *Odyssey* shares with the novel the themes of love, suitor competition, and (contested) conjugal fidelity as embodied in the tales about Helen and Penelope.²⁰ Further, the two extant Euripidean 'escape tragedies' treat the themes of adventure in faraway lands, such as the (near) sacrifices and successful escapes that are also common in the Greek novels, so that these partly foreshadow the later novelistic plot.²¹ Finally, the theme of male chastity is exemplified by the extremely popular myth of Hippolytus, which, besides its use in testing the male character's faithfulness, also provides in Phaedra a negative doublet for the both love-stricken and chaste female protagonist.²² It may be accidental that only meagre papyrological support exists for the escape tragedies, for example the *Helen* or the *Iphigenia* plays, since other literary and visual evidence suggests that these plays were very popular during the Empire.²³ Given this intertextual predilection I will concentrate here on four myths that are tightly related to the story of the female novelistic protagonist: Iphigenia, Phaedra, Penelope and Helen. While these tales exemplify the transition from virginity to womanhood and explore the themes of suitor competition, faithfulness and unfaithfulness, even more importantly they include travel, adventures, separations, and happy reunions.

These narratives were popular not only in the Greek novels. My approach is to consider a selection of instances of these four myths in such contemporary prose authors as Dio, Plutarch, Lucian, Maximus of Tyre, and Philostratus. These authors of the Second Sophistic are good testimonies to the ongoing *Mythenkritik* and will provide a broader background for how the novel uses myth. Although these works are not themselves novels, nonetheless they suggest a change in the treatment of erotic myths onto which was often appended a happy ending, such as the marriage of Helen and Achilles in Philostratus' *Heroicus*. Next, I briefly inspect a pool of mythographers such as Ps.-Apollodorus, or more *recherché* manuals such as those by Parthenius, Antoninus Liberalis, or *periegetes* such as Pausanias. These works, too, show an interest in variants of traditional erotic tales that were contemporaneous with the novels; therefore, they are equally

¹⁹ Marrou 1948 and Cribiore 2001.

²⁰ E.g. Fusillo 1991 (1989) and Reardon 1991, 132.

²¹ E.g. Trenkner 1958.

²² E.g. Smith 2007b.

²³ Barrett 1964, 53–52 suggests that the selection represents a scholarly or educative initiative and not the taste of the times. For the popularity in imperial literature see Hall 2013a.

important for understanding the novel's attitude towards myth.²⁴ Moreover, the novel's own take on traditional mythology ought to be considered too, since each novelist bequeathed to his successors not only a love plot but also a model for merging the love and adventure plot with traditional myth.

Equally, visual evidence is important. Like the frescoes and mosaics in private villas, love novels – as opposed to declamation, for example – were not meant for 'public' display but bear testimony to the kind of erotic tales favoured in the private sphere.²⁵ To the best of our knowledge, the novels were for private degustation, whether in small or larger circles.²⁶ It is not surprising therefore that mosaics and novels treat similar mythical themes, such as Hippolytus and Phaedra, Helen's and Paris' meeting, or Iphigenia's escape by sea. Moreover, as the novel became more popular as a form, parts of the novelistic plot were taken as erotic themes to be represented among others on floors and wall paintings of private houses, as indicated by the second-century mosaics inspired by the *Ninus Romance* and the *Parthenope*.²⁷ What these mosaics tell us about the property owners is their interest in love stories, mythical as well as novelistic. It is impossible in this study to take into consideration all the visual evidence available. However, given the prominence of visual culture in the novel and the chief role of *ekphrasis* in it, it would be methodological unsafe to exclude entirely the visual testimonies.²⁸

²⁴ Bowie 2008.

²⁵ Gazda and Haeckl 1991. See Whitmarsh 2011, 11, for the novels not being a product of the civic Greek world as opposed to plays that were part of a performative context.

²⁶ Very few things are known about who read the novels and how, and whether they considered them a genre at all. See Bowie 1994, Bowie 1996, Bowie 2003, Hunter 2008. For female readership see Haynes 2003. For embedded readers in Ancient Narrative and how they illustrate the 'actual' intended readership see e.g. Bartsch 1989, Morgan 1991, and Morgan 2009c.

²⁷ Levi 1947, Hägg 2004 (1994).

²⁸ For the role of *ekphrasis* see e.g. Billault 1979, Bartsch 1989, Goldhill 2007, Webb 2009. There are also some studies that examine novelistic scenes next to real works of art of the Empire: e.g. Pierre Grimal in his 1958 translation of Chariton for *La Bibliothèque de la Pléiade*, 1458 n.1 compares Callirhoe's funeral with the frieze of the Panathenaea from the Parthenon, cited in Billault 1979, 200. Also for Callirhoe's statuesque erotic depictions see Elsom 1992, Egger 1994a, and Zeitlin 2003, esp. 70–80, esp. the theatrical dimension; for Praxiteles' Cnidian Aphrodite and Callirhoe see Hunter 1994, 1075; for Anthia's statuesque description and the Artemis figurines see Hägg 1983 (1980), 27; see also Zeitlin 2013 about the Andromeda representations in Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus. See Morales 2004, 33, 221 for Melite as a statue of Aphrodite. For Longus' Dionysiac painting at 4.3.2 and the sanctuary of Dionysus in Athens (Paus. 1.20.3) see the speculative Laplace 2010, 86, note 7. For the opening of Heliodorus and the description of the *mnesterophonia* see Tagliabue 2015.

Having thus outlined the literary and visual background of the novel's milieu, I will examine the four myths about female heroines alongside the story of the novelistic protagonist. In what follows I suggest a different take on both myth and intertextuality via a structural and narratological analysis of the imperial mythical vulgate and the novelistic plot. The Greek novels, I argue, shape their plot according to the expectations of a readership well versed both in mythical and novelistic narratives. Taking the novel's emphasis on mutual love and chastity as an indispensable constraint and means of achieving the happy ending, I will explore the four relevant, major mythical clusters about women, namely Iphigenia, Phaedra, Penelope and Helen, that occasionally foreshadow or contradict the novel's own story. Using these as the backbone of my analysis I then explore their contribution to the articulation of the novelistic plot in order to show how a careful analysis of the mythical themes and motifs forms a kind of structural metalanguage that illustrates the readership's expectations of the new genre: a kind of early myth-based novelistic grammar.²⁹

The Greek novels are not at the centre of the literary production of the Second Sophistic and very little is known about their readership. However, the context in which they were written sheds some light on how they work their way around myth while maintaining their own generic characteristics. Because they flourished around the same time as the highbrow literature often used in public declamation, and because they did not lack in sophistication, the novels may help us understand the literary trends of the Empire, representing the missing link between written and oral or public and private literary culture. In an era in which traditional Greek myths served as hot topics for sophisticated virtuoso criticism, the novels provide an interesting insight into different receptions of the old tales. This book focuses on the novelistic manipulation of traditional lore, which in turn function as a metaliterary device for deciphering the plots of the novels. Nonetheless, before embarking upon the main examination of the texts, I revisit here two sensitive terms that appear frequently in the course of the analysis and which, like Clinias' female mythical celebrities, have long been the subject of complex scholarly debate: 'myth' and 'intertext'.

²⁹ The structure of the novelistic plot in grammatical/syntactical terms was the focus of structuralists such as Todorov 1968 and his '*grammaire du récit*', for modern novels.

Coming to Terms with

‘Myth’

The novel has been thought to have strong ties to myth. But if the concept of myth is hard to grasp in genres that engage directly with traditional tales in a ritual context, such as tragedy, how much more difficult is to assess the relationship between myth and the novel! In the excerpt from Achilles Tatius above, we saw that myth is everywhere: novels contain myths from the epic or the stage, metamorphosis or aetiological or allegorical local myths such as the tale about the origins of the Nile in Heliodorus. Additionally, a supreme divinity often rules the plot, such as Aphrodite in Chariton or Artemis in Xenophon. The variety is great and almost beyond classification. Myths may appear as quotations from a particular text, as extensive embedded narratives, or *en passant*; they may be secular or sacred. However, it is not just the breadth of mythical allusions in the novel that prompts its association with ‘myth’ but also the admittedly similar plot pattern of the five extant Greek novels that occasionally gives the impression that they are five variations on a new kind of ‘myth’ one with a happy ending. Myth, then, is a delicate term to use, if not downright misleading. In this series that favours the interaction between Mythos, Eikon, and Poiesis, the term myth requires further elucidation. Thus, because I intend to use the word ‘myth’ and its cognates in my study, I want to briefly present the earlier takes on the term before explaining my own.

Under the influence of the Ritualist School, myth in the novel was related to ritual, which implied that the novels had ‘sacred’ meaning. This point of view, with different variations, was adopted as early as Kerényi (1927) and carried further by Merkelbach (1962), who saw in these works an encrypted ‘sacred narrative’ about initiation.³⁰ New alternatives to this view emphasise the cultural and religious contexts in which the novels were written: for example Beck (2003), Dowden (1999), and Bierl (2009) explore the religious echoes of imperial religion and rituals, such as initiation rituals, sacrifices, and rites of passage. Lalanne (2006), on the other hand, approaches the novel from an anthropological perspective, surveying its representation of teenagehood alongside the model ‘mythes de la jeunesse’, such as Artemis or Perseus. Whitmarsh (2011) has recently applied van Genepp’s tripartite initiation pattern with an eye to the organisation of the narrative around it and its contribution to the construction of a narrative imperial identity. And yet, despite the primary role of religion in the novel, most of the myths alluded to therein are erotic and not sacred. Thus, religion plays an

30 There is no reason here to review these opinions already challenged by Turcan 1963.

auxiliary, not a protagonistic, role.³¹ With Lalanne (2006) and Whitmarsh (2011), 44 we shift towards a broader cultural and narratological spectrum where ‘the romances should be read in terms of “ritual poetics”, of literary strategy rather than of “serious” religious homiletics.’

Whereas myth and religio-cultural milieu are still investigated there are fewer attempts to study the Greek novel as a genre that emerged from local aetiological myths,³² as E. Rohde (1960 (1876)) and Lavagnini (1921) suggest. A recent take on local mythography, again from a cultural point of view, is provided by Whitmarsh (2013), who argues for an echo of ‘collections of local myths’ such as that of Parthenius in the Greek novel; he uses Longus as his chief example.³³ Of course erudite novels – especially Longus and Achilles Tatius – present, among others, aetiological tales with an interest in local lore.³⁴ However, the genre’s broader mythical orientation is the mythical *koine* understood by both the Greek and the Hellenised alike, and the local touches stand next to (and are probably overshadowed by) the mythical vulgate.³⁵

Another persistent trend is to oppose the instances of the ancient notion of ‘*mythos*’ in the novel with the philosophically, and supposedly objectively defined, ‘*logos*’. Thus the Greek novel, according to some scholars, is a myth in the sense of falsehood or fiction because it narrates a story, which is a lie, or exactly the kind of tales by philosophers and sophists Xenophanes criticised.³⁶ B. E. Perry (1967), 38 further distinguishes between different shades of falsehood: ‘the real romance is falsehood (*pseudos*) only when judged by the alien standards of historiography, when judged with reference to its own standards as a literary

31 Zeitlin 2008, 94–98 convincingly demonstrates the difference between the Greek and the Christian novels when treating the divine and the role of Providence in the narrative.

32 As Ruiz-Montero 1996, 61 demonstrates; although support for this theory has waned. Under the same template could also be grouped the question about the oral sources of the novel as discussed by Ruiz-Montero 2003 and O’ Sullivan 1995; for a critique see Hägg 2004 (1994), who argues for a literary basis.

33 For other views on the ‘glocal’ identity of the Greeks during the period see Whitmarsh 2010a, 3.

34 Often they were even read as *patria* by later writers such as Nonnus, whose adaptation of Achilles Tatius’ novel focuses not only on the erotic material but also on these local details, e.g. Chuvin 2013 on the description of Tyre.

35 Lightfoot 1999, 263 argues that the novels and Parthenius’ *Pathemata*, besides the common erotic theme and the common interest in historiography and local legends, belong to ‘two different classes of narrative’, the *Pathemata* being ‘in the borderline between *historia* and *mythos*’, whereas the events in the novel ‘are more like a reduced version of *historia* combined with *plasmata*.’

36 Cf. Perry 1967, 22–25 on Plato shaping Aristotle’s views of literature and the subsequent influence on the genre of the novel. See also the Reardon 1994, placing of Longus between *mythos* and *logos*. The main discussion is Buxton 1999 on Nestle 1942.

genre, it is a legitimate artistic creation (*plasma*).’ Ruiz-Montero (1991) investigates the relationship between the fictional, non-myth-based but invented, narratives in the *Progymnasmata* and the novel and finds that they fit the rhetorical categories of fictional composition.³⁷ However, the evidence from the *Progymnasmata* is often regarded as controversial since there is not always a clear division between the mythical (*mythikai diegeseis*) and the invented tales (*plasmatikai diegeseis*), not to mention that the very meaning of “*mythos*” is unclear.³⁸ More cautiously, Webb (2009) emphasises the importance of the *Progymnasmata* in order to understand the rhetorical techniques used in the Greek novels and how oratory prepared imperial readers to exercise their imagination by training them to envision themselves in different situations. The novel, she argues, not only needs to make the fictional apparent but also to make the audience realise the artificiality of its own subject matter, moving thus further away from the category of *plasmatikon*.³⁹

A different way of thinking argues that, if the novel’s plot is on the border between truth and fiction, then it must be a form of historiography, especially given that the second titles of the novels echo local manuals, such as *Ephesiaca* or *Aethiopica*. But even within the historiographical genre it is quite demanding to delineate where true and ‘truer’ histories lie, and Lucian, writing roughly in the same period as Achilles Tatius, makes this evident.⁴⁰ This purported historicity, as Richard Hunter (1994) labels it, is not a clear indication of a struggle between historical and non-historical material in the novel.⁴¹ Rather, historicity points to a kind of pact made with the reader of a fictional work in prose, the medium *par excellence* of truthful narratives, such as historiography and philosophy. Morgan

37 E.g. Hermog. *Prog.* 2., gives four categories of speech: ‘one is the mythological, another is the fictional/imaginative, which they also call dramatic, such as the stories by the tragedians, then (comes) the historical, and last the political or the narrative about individuals.’ And yet it would have been impossible to say what exactly the terms *πλασματικὸν* and *δραματικὸν* have in common. Rohde 1960 (1876), 371, based on an obscure sophist, Nicostratus argued that there was a rhetorical category of ‘dramatic myth’; Tilg 2010a, 205 has convincingly contested the claim.

38 For the ‘afterlife’ of the term *plasma* see Bowersock 1994, 7. For the connection between fiction and rhetoric see Morgan 1993 and Webb 2009 esp. 154–168. I find Webb’s classification of *πλάσμα* restrictive in that she uses mainly the evidence from Nicolaus’ *Prog.* 11.9–13 to prove that *πλάσμα*, which she interprets as closer to the term ‘fiction’, describes things that ‘could have happened’, whereas myths describe unrealistic events. For the novel see also the discussion in Tilg 2010a, 204–08, opposing *mythos* to *diegema*, the supposed Charitonian term for this new fictional genre.

39 Webb 2009, 178–85.

40 Bowersock 1994.

41 For Chariton see Hunter 1994, for Heliodorus Bowersock 1994, 149–51 and Hägg 1987, 200–01; and Trzaskoma 2011.

(1993), 187 has long argued for the importance of historiography in conceiving the contract of ‘fictional complicity’ between the author of a (quasi or not) historiographical text and his reader so as to accept a reading as – fictionally, historiographically, or factually – true.⁴² As with local myths, *aetia* or legends, historiographical details increase plausibility and encourage the contract between text and reader that allows him to enter its fictional universe.⁴³ Still, although the novel uses the historiographical medium, namely prose, this does not make it more historical than mythical. Besides, prose was also the medium of philosophical dialogue, and Plato, despite his disenchantment with poets and poetry, not only wrote ‘myths’ but also presented Socrates transposing Aesop’s prose ‘*mythoi*’ into verse.⁴⁴ If, then, there is no concrete medium for ‘myths’, and Clinias lists Candaules’ wife alongside Phaedra and Penelope, we must acknowledge that the boundaries between history and myth are frail and that an exploration of the mythical in the novel does not necessarily contradict its historical touches.

For other scholars, the typical novelistic plot of loss and reunion was seen as ‘variations on a theme’.⁴⁵ Just as Greek literature plays with variants of myths, the novels were similarly thought to be evidence for a tale’s deep structure. Reardon (1971) characteristically argued that the novel represents the ‘Hellenistic myth’. He follows Perry, for whom romance illustrates ‘the adventures or experiences of one or more individuals in their private capacities and from the viewpoint of their private interests and emotions.’ Such claims are partly endowed with Perry’s socialist point of view, since the reason for this isolation was the rise of a middle-class citizenry. Reardon saw the social origins of the novelistic plot as illustrating ‘the isolation of the individual in the world.’⁴⁶ Reardon understood Perry’s social reading in psychoanalytical terms, and his understanding of the social anxiety of the era shows influence from the approach of Frye (1957), his contemporary, and Dodd’s (1951) treatment of the irrational.⁴⁷ Recently Whitmarsh (2011)

⁴² Cf. the observations of Ni-Mheallaigh 2008, 406 about the fictional character of such pseudo-historiographical works as Dictys’ *Ephemeris*, side-by-side with Lucian’s *True Histories*. In her view, the Second Sophistic readers ‘were aware of the specious nature of this narrative technique’ just as they were aware of ‘plasmatic’ and still vivid rhetorical descriptions, as presented by Webb 2009 above.

⁴³ Cf. Rifaterre 1993 (1990), xv, ‘verisimilitude is an artwork, since it is a verbal representation of reality rather than reality itself: therefore, verisimilitude, itself, entails fictionality’.

⁴⁴ Pl. *Phd.* 60d1. Brisson and Naddaf 1998, 47 and Most 2012 with literature.

⁴⁵ Cf. the title of Reardon 2004b.

⁴⁶ The quotations from Perry 1967, 44–45 and Reardon 1969, 293.

⁴⁷ Reardon 1991, 170–72. On Frye and psychoanalysis see Russel 1998, 91–93. On Reardon and Dodds see Dowden 2005, 24–25.

contested the idea of one shared novelistic plot. Thus, more emphasis has been placed on the individual character of each novel.⁴⁸

Other scholars have connected the apparently shared plot pattern of the five ideal novels to the Aristotelian notion of '*mythos*'. Myth in this case is understood in formal terms as a story pattern. Such an approach can be found in the analysis by Lowe (2000) who, in a semi-evolutionary way, reconstructs the novel's plot from earlier epic and dramatic plot structures.⁴⁹ A less formal version of this approach is the intertextual study of epic and drama in the Greek novel, with often contradictory but interesting results: for example, Fusillo (1991) argues for a secularisation of myths and genres during their distillation in the novels; Paulsen (1992) opts for an inclusive interpretation of dramatic and epic genres as both myths and plots; and Cueva (2004) does not distinguish enough, in my view, between the genres in which myths appear but approaches the novel from an intertextual point of view without, however, highlighting the overall importance of myth as a category for fiction.⁵⁰

The above exposé is far from exhaustive but indicates the complex status of myth in the Greek novel. The recent Introduction to the collection of myth-related articles from the ICAN IV at Lisbon by Futre-Pinheiro, Bierl, and Beck (2013), 7–47 is characteristic in this respect. Despite their initial shared inspiration from the Ritualist School, Anton Bierl, Jan Bremmer and Fritz Graf all reach astonishingly different conclusions. The first argues for the novel's being the 'New Myth' and inscribes the novel within a long tradition of Greek mytho-ritual poetics; Bremmer finds in the novel's mythical tales a sophisticated *tour de force*, characteristic of the taste of the times but without religious depth; Graf turns an eye towards the unobstructed continuation of Greek myth in late antiquity and sees the novels as interludes in this development, a 'reaction to mythical narratives ... prose instead of poetry, outstandingly good and beautiful or evil and nasty actors.'⁵¹ Not surprisingly, Bremmer and Bierl, and in another roundtable discussion Whitmarsh, take Achilles Tatius or Longus as their starting points, as do other scholars who want to relate novel to myth or *mythos*.⁵² Of course, in any discussion of the influence of myth, it is natural to take as starting point the corpus' only two novels that explicitly refer to their

48 E.g. Montiglio 2012 and De Temmerman 2014.

49 This Aristotelian notion of *mythos* is already present in Reardon 1991. See Schmeling 1993, 269 challenging Reardon's view of the Aristoteles based structuralism.

50 For a review see Whitmarsh 2005c.

51 The quotations are Bierl 10–11 Bremmer. 22; Graf 38 from Futre-Pinheiro, Bierl, and Beck 2013.

52 E.g. Laplace 1991 on Achilles Tatius, Reardon 2004a on Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus; Reardon 1994 on *mythos* and *logos* in Longus; Bierl 2013 on Longus and initiation and Whitmarsh 2013.

novelistic plot as it were a myth-like tale.⁵³ Yet, these novels were written in the heyday of the genre's *floruit* and do not necessarily tell us how the genre uses myth. Rather they illustrate how later novelists manipulate myth, based not only on the source texts but also on their predecessors' reworkings. The situation is complex indeed.

That being said, the investigation of the ancient term '*mythos*', which scholars often explore in the hope that it will eliminate the ideological and semasiological problems that surround the modern term 'myth',⁵⁴ complicates the situation further. Not only is '*mythos*' wide ranging in Greek literature, since the term is applied not only to Aesopic fables, Platonic myths and every other kind of mythical tale, but also (incoherently) to the five ideal Greek texts.⁵⁵ The conflation of '*mythos*' with 'myth' is the counterpart of a well-embedded binary opposition that contrasts the 'mythical' material, with other, supposedly non-mythical categories, such as '*logoi*', '*mythoi*', ritual, or other.⁵⁶ At this point, a compromise needs to be struck between the author of this book and her reader, both of whom are required to make some concessions about what each understands as 'myth' and/or '*mythos*' and to agree to use it as an inclusive category for all sorts of mythical tales, following Clitophon's and Clinias' example above. Without this first condition, an examination of the mythical in the Greek novels seems impossible.

Walter Burkert famously defines myth as a traditional tale with secondary, partial reference to something of collective importance.⁵⁷ However, Clitophon's and Clinias' world is no longer that of the closed city-state but of the Roman Empire and of mythical syncretism. Thus, any inflexible definition of the term

53 Ach. Tat. 1.2.2, τὰ γὰρ ἐμὰ μύθοις ἔοικε; Long. 2.27.2, παρθένον ἔξ' ἧς Ἔρωσ μῦθον ποιῆσαι θέλει.

54 Calame and Lloyd 2009, 507, 'The narratives that we lump together under the modern, partly metaphorical, category of 'myth' – in contrast to the Greek word *mythos*, which denotes any form of discourse that is argued and thought out effectively'.

55 Cf. Char. 6.3.2 'ἐν μύθοις τε καὶ ποιήμασιν' meaning poetic myth-based literature vs Callirhoe's tale as myth at 2.4.7, 'τῆς γυναικὸς μῦθόν μοι διηγῆ'. On the ambivalence of the ancient Greek term see Dowden 1992, 3–7 with further literature. For the Greek novels see Tilg 2010b.

56 Kirk 1970 believes in the utility of the term, while Calame and Lloyd 2009 challenge the binary opposition and deconstruct it. A more flexible position is taken by Buxton 1994, 219–20, who demonstrates the plurality of myth.

57 Burkert 1979, 23, 'Myth is traditional tale applied, and its relevance and seriousness stem largely from this application. The reference is secondary, as the meaning of the tale is not to be derived from it, in contrast to fable, which is invented for the sake of its application, and it is partial, since tale and reality will never be quite isomorphic in these applications. And still the tale often is the first and fundamental verbalisation of complex reality, the primary way to speak about many-sided problems, just as telling a tale was seen to be quite an elementary way of communication.'

would immediately exclude other expressions of it. Thus, when studying the intertextual presence of the mythical in the Greek novel, the above definition should be abstracted even further, so as to incorporate as many as of these mythical tales as possible. For the purposes of this study, ‘myth shall be understood as a traditional tale with a collective importance for a local (namely Greek) or a wider (namely Hellenised) community’, but not as part of any particular ritual context. This adapted definition from Walter Burkert is crucial for my approach here, since it combines the ‘traditional’ character of myth and its importance for the novel’s readership, although not in ritual but rather in narrative and cultural terms.⁵⁸ Were myths not tales with wide reverberations, the Greek novel would probably have no use for them besides sophistic embellishment. However, as we will see, in the novel, as throughout Greek literature, myth remains a continuous point of literary and cultural reference.

‘Intertext’

So far, I have contrasted a more conventional notion of myth with its transformation by the time of the Greek novel. Here, I want to draw on another aspect of myth, its relationship with text.⁵⁹ As Alexiou (2002), 164 observes: ‘myths do not die with the passage from orality to literacy; like Proteus they change shape and form.’ Oral storytelling, visual culture and ritual practices contribute to the diffusion of myth, but, for the era and the genre I am concerned with here, written texts were the primary means of transmission. However, not all novels are concerned with highlighting their debts to mythical tales.⁶⁰ Despite the more meticulous intertextual annotation observed in some novels, such as in Chariton, where full Homeric hexameters are inserted into the main narrative, other novels do not always make their borrowings explicit. There are plenty of instances where the novels allude to mythical examples more sketchily or more subtly.⁶¹ Therefore, we

⁵⁸ Cf. Whitmarsh 2011, 55.

⁵⁹ A similar approach has been applied to Herodotus by Boedeker 2002 and Wesselmann 2011, esp. 8–14. But Wesselmann 2011 works with a twofold notion of myth, e.g. 42, both as ‘traditional tale about heroes’ and as ‘intertextual, epic or dramatic’ version of it, without always merging them under the same mega-textual template.

⁶⁰ For the variety of intertexts see e.g. Hinds 1998; for intertextuality between genres see Harrison 2007.

⁶¹ Cf. the hanging of the adulterous wife: Phaedra in E. *Hipp.* 802, βρόχον κρεμαστὸν ἀγχόνης ἀνήψατο explicitly applied to Arsace in Hld. 1.8.3, ἀγχόνῃ προλήψομαι τὴν ὕβριν. Cf. a subtle allusion to Helen in Hld. 8.7.4, ὦ δαμονία ... τρύχουσα καὶ καταναλίσκουσα μάτην echoing E. *Hel.* 1285, τρύχουσα σαντήν. For a thematic echo see for example the tablet hanging from

find express allusions that range from a kind of ‘Alexandrian footnote’⁶² to more- or less-subtly suggested mythical intertexts, the meaning of which might have been more evident to an imperial audience, which, like Clinias and Clitophon, was continuously exposed to mythical vulgate.⁶³

In Clinias’ examples above the thematic kernel of his recitation is the association between ‘female beauty’, ‘lust’ and ‘male death’. His invitation to Clitophon to add more examples to his own already extensive list shows the flexibility and compliance of these tales. Clinias’ choice of examples is adapted to a reading suited to his own cause, namely homosexual erotics. By including in his list the famously faithful Penelope or the innocent and submissive Chryseis and Briseis in order to show that, ultimately, *all* women are evil and dangerous, Clinias emphasises the dreary fate of their suitors. His selection and modification mainly demonstrates that any intertextual reading is unavoidably subjective and relevant to a particular discourse setting; its meaning is the outcome of the interaction between a narrative, its narrator, its addressee, and the overall context. Roman visual art, with its snippets of episodes from broader mythical tales, is characteristic of the kind of reading culture and interpretative practices one may encounter in the novels: a viewer of paintings scattered across different walls and floor surfaces of a villa, or of a frieze representing different episodes of a well-known story, ought to be able to reconstruct the rest from his own background knowledge.⁶⁴ A merger of (intertextual mythical) horizons is prerequisite to understanding the gaps that could not be represented fully in visual art.⁶⁵ A mythical vulgate was therefore a system that was shared between the members of the educated elite.⁶⁶

Thus, the mythical allusions in the Greek novels need to be reconsidered via a more broadly understood thematic intertextual net that is based not only on verbatim allusions but also on the motifs, themes, and patterns that were inherent

Phaedra’s hand and the one from Melite’s neck in E. *Hipp.* 856, τί δὴ ποθ’ ἦδε δέλτος ἐκ φίλης χερὸς ἡρτημένῃ; and Ach. Tat. 8.12.9, ἐγγράψασα τὸν ὄρκον γραμματεῖω μνησθῶ δεδεμένον περιεθήκατο τῇ δέρῃ.

⁶² See Ross 1975, 78 and the discussion in Hinds 1998, 8–9, 40, 58.

⁶³ For the contribution of intertextuality to studying the cultural context see the analysis by Nicholson 2013.

⁶⁴ E.g. Stewart 1977 on Laocoon and Tiberius, Bergmann 1994 on the Roman house as a ‘memory theatre’, where the audience had to retrieve from memory and fill in the gaps to make sense of the paintings and their sequence. See also Brilliant 1984 on narrative art. For modern cognitive approaches on how and what the readers remember from a story see for example Phillips 2015, 70–72 who observes that the slightest phrases or words can trigger particular situations and patterns in the brain.

⁶⁵ On the shared background knowledge between text and its reader see Jauss 1982.

⁶⁶ For the shapes and motifs in Roman Art as a system see also Hölscher 2000 (1987), who argues for an ongoing visual grammar.

to those mythical texts. For an audience well versed in ‘myth-o-logical’ thinking, these motifs, themes and patterns would have been triggered by the subtlest allusion.⁶⁷ What I understand as mythical structural intertextuality, i. e. the exploration of the relationship between the main storyline of the novel and the mythical tales from epic, drama, visual arts and other sources, requires a broadening of both the concept of reception procedure and of the devices of annotation that this entails. When dealing with myth in the first three centuries there was no such thing as a single authoritative text transmitting one myth, although there were ‘more standard’ and ‘less standard’ versions thereof. Scholarly intertextual approaches continuously investigate the richness and diversity of these relationships,⁶⁸ but beyond the intertexts, the overarching structure of these mythical texts has not, in my view, been studied sufficiently nor fully grasped.

‘Megatext’

For the purposes of the approach adopted here I will not rely on a one-to-one intertextual approach. Instead, I aim for an inclusive organisation and reception of the mythical material through various allusions to the myths in question in both literary and visual narratives. This endeavour will permit a better understanding of the literary horizons shared between the novels and their readers at the time the novel flourished. I will then attempt to reconstruct what I call the ‘mythical megatext’ that the imperial reader might have had to hand when asked to recall a particular myth or a particular detail of a myth. Expanding on the view of drama outlined in Segal (1983) the ‘megatext of a myth’ is namely ‘the totality of themes or songs that the poets (*here the novelists*) of an oral (*and in the first centuries oral, visual and written*)⁶⁹ culture would have available in their repertoires, but also the network of more or less subconscious patterns, or “deep structure” or “undisplaced forms”, which tales of a given type share with one another.’

All these different variations were condensed, not to a single version but to a more or less concrete pattern, a predefined selection and arrangement of possible scenarios, so that a reader versed in mythical literary texts would be able

⁶⁷ For the reader fills in gaps see Culler 1975, 117 ‘The rule of significance’ and Iser 1978 on the reader’s role in deciphering the text. For how subtle allusions evoke myths, as well as texts and genres, see Conte 1986, 29, ‘Intertextuality, far from being a matter of merely recognizing the ways in which specific texts echo each other, defines the condition of literary readability.’

⁶⁸ Cf. the Helen myth in Chariton as analysed by Laplace 1980 and the mix of dramatic genres in Heliodorus as discussed by Paulsen 1992.

⁶⁹ The quotation which I owe to S. Harrison, from Segal 1983, 176.

to predict its outcome.⁷⁰ To shift Saussure's practical linguistic model between *synchronie* (parole) and *diachronie* (langue) onto a narratological level,⁷¹ we can argue that the mythical megatext includes a selection of the motifs, themes and patterns available from the vertical paradigmatic axis that included all the possible manifestations of a myth. Choosing to tell one version did not mean that the others were disregarded. Rather, sense is made because one version is chosen over the others, so that the unselected possibilities also contribute to understanding the role played by the preferred version.⁷² Greek myth, then, can be understood as a relatively coherent mytho-logical megatext, the structure of which was well known and embedded in the educated reader's mind. The mythical motifs, themes and patterns were often featured instead of (or together with) explicit allusions, and they were not static but part of an evolving mythical vulgate, which, despite its flexibility, continued to revise mythical tales that had a particular cultural meaning and ought to be transmitted further.⁷³

Myths have long played a part in scholarly structural and narratological analysis, and the works of anthropologists such as Claude Lévi-Strauss' *Anthropologie structurale* or Walter Burkert's *Homo Necans* have been very influential. In those cases the structure of myth, or of a mythical narrative, is supposed to unveil something outside the tale, outside the story logic, such as a cultural, psychological, biological and/or mental procedure. Most structural approaches to literary texts go back to linguistics and Saussure's dichotomy of the now (*synchronie*) and ever (*diachronie*).

70 Conte's 1986 analysis of Roman allusive poetry presents a comparable case for the use of intertexts but for a very different pool of texts. See also Conte 1986, 24 distinction between 'denotative' and 'connotative' semiotics when it comes to allusions. See also further at 144 on how the epic norm changes and 'orients the code according to a definite ideological set, by adding connotative – historically contextualised – meanings to the epic sense of that system.'

71 The distinction here follows broadly the definition of the 'syntagmatic' and 'paradigmatic' levels of interpretation as defined by Saussure 1966, who argued that the signifier obtains its meaning when examined within a system: the system is created by taking into consideration its relationship to its neighbouring elements (syntagma) as well as to its selection among a list of possible substitutes (paradigm). Saussure's method has been used by a variety of scholars working on myth, e.g. Lévi-Strauss 1958, but each of them has a different understanding of the categories of 'syntagmatic' and 'paradigmatic', depending on their selection of texts. Conte's 1986 work on allusion is closer to what I am doing here.

72 Cf. Porter Abbott 2015, 104, who draw a distinction between stories that are 'disnarrated', or references in the text of other story options that do *not* take place, and 'shadow stories', which are 'sensed possibilities of what might be the case, what might link the dots, however likely or unlikely.'

73 For the ongoing belief on Greek myth despite the critique see Veyne 1983. The italics in the parenthesis are mine.

chronie) of language.⁷⁴ Todorov (1970) for example applies Lévi-Strauss' analysis of the Oedipus myth to the *Liaisons dangereuses*. Barthes (1970) in his *S/Z* attempts a segmentation of the basic units of the narrative that relate more or less directly with other texts, the *lexias*. Culler (1975) is still a good overview of these structuralist approaches to poetics, and he is right to observe that in exploring structure 'the analyst's task is not to develop a taxonomy of plots or new metalanguages for their transcription ... <but> he must attempt to explicate the metalanguage within the reader himself.' Culler's observation is important because it stresses the significance of the readership in understanding the structure of the story.⁷⁵

The Greek novel has also been a favourite subject for formal and structural approaches either because of its ample use of myth, or due to its similarity with folktale narratives, or simply for its supposedly myth-like plot.⁷⁶ Keyes' (1922) early analysis, for example, compares the *in medias res* composition of the *Aethiopica* with that of the *Odyssey*, and MacQueen (1990) attempts a formal examination of Longus' narrative around the aetiological myths. An overarching approach based on Propp's Märchen-poetics has been carried out by Ruiz-Montero (1981),

⁷⁴ Allan 2000, 80ff.

⁷⁵ I use here the term 'structural' as opposed to the terms 'structuralist' as I am not applying in my work a particular structuralist approach, whether anthropological or narratological. However, I have greatly profited from the theoretical framework of structuralist studies such as Culler's 1975 'structuralist poetics'; for the importance of the reader in the cognitive processing of narrative see Iser 1978 and Eco 1979. Further, the novel as genre, as I will show, engages the reader in a particular kind of interpretation. Genre Theory was first illustrated in Todorov 1990, who explores the shifts in the 'internal' structure of genres and their constant modifications. Genre and readership are further explored in Hirsch 1967 and especially in Jauss 1982, who famously suggests the merger between the author's and the reader's horizons of expectations. Such approaches to genre with a focus on the reader have been already used in Classics and they have yielded such fruitful results as the analysis of Conte 1994 (1991) on Lucretius, Skoie 2006 on the pastoral genre as a 'process of reception', Cairns 2007, and Harrison 2007 on 'generic enrichment' in Virgil and Horace. Like Virgil and Horace, the novel manipulates and revisits other high genres such as epic and tragedy, but also lower genres too. That being said, because myth is such a complex system, we shall see that the novels do not appeal to one myth from either epic or drama but to a broader complex intertextual mythical vulgate. The great difficulty when studying the Greek novel is not just to identify the myths it alludes to but also their precise intertexts, while remembering that those myths are simultaneously parts of a broader megatext.

⁷⁶ On narratology see Hägg 1971a and the contributions in the collections of Irene de Jong, e.g. Morgan 2004a on narrators, De Temmerman and Morgan 2012 on space, and especially De Temmerman 2014, 27–33, who explores the structuralist construction of novelistic characters by the narrator and the embedded focalisers as syntactical but mainly vertical assemblage ... 'requiring the reader to engage in a continuous process of negotiation, revision, and redefinition (of character) ... thus, reader interpretation is situated within the bounds of narrative, but at the same time is an open concept, subject to speculation, enrichment, and revision.'

who attempts to discover Propp's functions in the Greek novels. However, Propp's rules work well for his own corpus of texts but would not do justice to a genre of the complexity of such a story as *Leucippe and Clitophon*. That said, an analysis of the novels in Proppian terms would necessarily skim their plot down to such minimal narrative units as are unavoidably universal, and would thus discard the particular character of each work and its engagement with the culture of Greek *paideia*.⁷⁷ The Greek novels are not folktales, although they do flirt with oral tradition and include strong folkloric components,⁷⁸ mainly motifs based on the Aarne-Thompson Index, as for example G. Anderson (2007) shows, expanding on Trenkner's (1958) earlier findings.⁷⁹ Among the more interesting formal analyses is also Reardon's (1991), esp. 170–74, work on the 'form' of the Greek Romance that attempts to define the common 'pattern' of the love and adventure story but with an eye to the social transformations of the Hellenistic world, not the narrative itself. Reardon does not engage with myth itself but assimilates the novelistic to the mythical seeing myth in Aristotelean terms qua *mythos*: a plot that mirrors, symbolically, the socio-cultural milieu of the genre.⁸⁰ However, the Greek novels are neither folktales nor myths but sophisticated narratives of the Empire that manipulate their folktale and mythical elements self-consciously, so as to show the genre's own input into imperial fiction.

We observed above that the novel's basic story – mutual love, loss, and reunion – was not a popular theme of Greek myth that preferred ill-fated outcomes. In fact, its very matrix seems much like the kind of *novellae*, or short stories often of local colour, which were based on oral storytelling and meant for entertainment.⁸¹ Trenkner (1958), in her still original approach to classical literature, discusses how the novel, like other high genres before it, exploited this rich popular material.⁸² Indeed, as we now know, there must have been many oral tales of different local colour: Persian, Jewish, Egyptian and other chroni-

⁷⁷ See also Kim 2013, 305–06.

⁷⁸ See also the use of oral formulas in Xenophon as O' Sullivan 1995 argues.

⁷⁹ It is impossible to distinguish between what is mythical and what comes from oral lore. See for example Kirk 1970, 8–9, and 41 'Perseus story is a myth with strong folktale components'.

⁸⁰ See the review by Schmeling 1993.

⁸¹ Cf. Bowie 2008, 30 the novella of 'Zariadres and Odis' in Athen. *Deipn.* 13.357 = Chares of Mytilene *FGrH* 125F 5. The two lovers dream of each other and Zariadres abducts Odis at a symposium organised for her to choose a husband. They live happily ever after.

⁸² Cf. O'Sullivan 1995, 95–96 who takes Trenkner's approach further, suggesting that Xenophon's novel bears traces of an orally transmitted tale. On folkloric motifs see Anderson 2000, Anderson 2006, and Anderson 2007 although, none of them works with the overall structure of the novel. On the importance of oral and popular narratives see Kim 2013 and for the oral diffusion on mythical tales and performative nature of imperial culture see also Hawes 2014, 188.

cles with cross-cultural appeal.⁸³ However, from the moment a narrative is put down, it engages with the language and genre conventions within which it is composed.⁸⁴ The folkloric core of these narratives – these elements of romance⁸⁵ such as love at first sight, faithfulness, adventures, potions or magical helpers – is immediately transformed into the form of a novel in prose and becomes part of the buoyant intellectual production of the Second Sophistic. If the ravishing Calirhoe is abducted and waits for Chaereas to save her just as princesses in fairytales do, this does not underplay the reflexive allusions to the Helen myth, whose two primary versions are the *Iliad* and the *Helen*. Thus, the folkloric elements are no less important than the classical myths for decoding these texts.

That said, it is not fortuitous that the Greek novel shows a predilection for those classical texts that also include some folkloric elements, such as the *Odyssey* or Euripides' escape tragedies.⁸⁶ As Plato says, 'like always clings to like.' If intertextual research repeatedly shows how important the Helen myth was for the novel, this is not because there were no other mythical Beauties, but because Helen's story was inherently similar to the story about the bold and beautiful novelistic heroines, something that loomed in the universal storytelling motifs common to both genres. Still, the extent to which each novel alludes to and revisits the myth of Helen, as well as the degree to which it balances the novelistic/folkloric and the mythical components, is suggestive of the way each novel fashions itself vis-à-vis its readership: a story with a more or less folkloric background that engages differently with Greek *paideia* and its myths.

Given that we are not able to assess the volume and pathways of oral storytelling, we must take the majority of our intertextual evidence from the novels' well-attested literary engagement with classical texts, and it is primarily this material that the ongoing intertextual analysis reveals. However, we might be able to peek into the orally-transmitted material if we were to concentrate on both, the overlap between novel and myth and its divergence from the mythical narratives that the megatext imposes: in other words, if we searched for other, non-myth-related logic in the narrative. What is not directly myth-related, in my view, points to a different

83 For an overview see Kim 2013. E.g. Egyptian demotic literature in Jasnow 1997; on Petronius' novellae see Walsh 1970; for Jewish elements see Brant 2005; for Persian fantasies in Chariton see Llewellyn-Jones 2013.

84 See for example Foley 1990, 5 on how language and prosody as well as genre influence our understanding of the Homeric epics described as 'oral-derived texts' in written form.

85 The term 'romance' has been often used to describe the erotic content of the so-called ideal Greek novels, e.g. Reardon 1991. For romance novels, as opposed to other travel and return novels, see Whitmarsh 2011, 13–18.

86 For the function of folktales in the *Odyssey* see Kirk 1970, esp. 34; for Euripides' versions of Helen and Iphigenia see Trenkner 1958, 50–55 and Anderson 2000, 88. Pl. *Symp.* 195b.

source of material, motifs, themes and plot patterning that was, if not folkloric then at least novelistic, inherent to the genre the five Greek novels were written.⁸⁷

In the following chapters, I will examine the imperial mythical megatexts related to Iphigenia, Phaedra, Helen and Penelope prior to my analysis of the novels, so as to derive the recurrent basic narrative elements of the myths and how they might have been seen by the novel's contemporary readers. These repeated elementary units will be labelled as motifs, if they are of basic, or as themes, if of broader importance.⁸⁸ Then I shall attempt to orchestrate these motifs in a syntagmatic sequence that illustrates how a mythical tale was articulated linearly during the act of narration, if narrowed down to its main plot ingredients. My aim is not to deduce the elementary blocks of any narrative but infer the kind of motifs and patterns that an imperial audience might have had in mind when prompted to recall the corpus of a particular mythical tale.⁸⁹ Admittedly, any selection of basic motifs is by nature arbitrary and subjective.⁹⁰ That said, the classification of any narrative into themes and motifs is nonetheless methodologically necessary, especially if we want to reconstruct the ancient readership's take on the novel.⁹¹ Unlike cognitive

87 We cannot argue for folkloric elements except for those motifs that are part of the universal folklore, which is why I prefer to use the term 'novelistic' for the motifs, themes and patterns that we often encounter in the particular genre.

88 Of these motifs, only some correspond to the Aarne and Thompson 1928 classification and most are based on my own observations of the particular corpus of narratives. Classicists have been very hesitant in this respect regarding the ideal Greek novels: Ruiz-Montero 1981 for example works with functions, not with motifs, and only Anderson 2000, Anderson 2006 and see also 2007 work towards this direction. Scholars have been more audacious with less ideal narratives, such as the *Story of Apollonius King of Tyre* that has been interpreted on the basis of universal motifs, e.g. Schmeling 1998 and Panayotakis 2012a, 96–98, or Apuleius' novel as in Scobie 1983.

89 In modern Cognitive Studies this would have been the outcome of an experiment in which the subjects would have to summarise a particular tale. For an overview of how individual and culturally influenced memory is researched see Erl 2009. There is also rich ongoing work on cultural, local and individual memory in Classics, with a focus on the Roman Empire, e.g. Bowie 1970, Small 1997, and Whitmarsh 2010a; on memory and art see Elsner 1995; see also Galinski and Lepatin 2016. These studies focus more on what and how something is remembered than on its formal articulation.

90 See the interesting observations of the contributors in Segal 1966, 299, 32 (Propp *contra* Lévi Strauss) 300 (Peratdottó *contra* Lévi Strauss).

91 Cf. Uther 2009, 19, 'On pragmatic grounds, a clear distinction between motif and type is not possible because the boundaries are not clearly defined. With this attitude, a monographic investigation can distinguish between content and theme and still consider form and function as the properties that determine the genre of the narrative. Some early advocates of narrative classification envisioned an exact system like that of the natural sciences, analogous to biological classification, this vision was later influenced by semantic and structural research. Such hope for scientific exactness must be seen as a product of the wishful thinking of the time. Nevertheless, narratives must not be analysed arbitrarily but according to structural considerations. Just

literary researchers we no longer have the the actual audience to provide helpful summaries but are compelled to reconstruct them from the available evidence.

Roughly following the structural model, I will organise my material thus: into the paradigmatic sequence I shall group all the other versions to which the narrator and his/her audience had access and which hinted at a variety of different and possibly opposing outcomes. The deeper structure of a myth is revealed by the combination of the two readings, the chosen syntagmatic – namely the linear articulation of the selected plot in motifs, themes and patterns – and the paradigmatic axis, or: all other mythical possibilities that were recalled connotatively. This dynamic Saussurean approach does not intend to unveil the pattern of every narrative or of every imperial fictional work, much less the mythical narratives, but focuses only on the five Greek novels and their manipulation of mythical patterns. This articulation of the megatext will be used to explore the interchange between what a reader is told/reads and what s/he anticipates hearing/read by manipulating the shared pool of knowledge of the mythical megatext within the constraints of the novelistic plot.

In order to assess the reading challenges that a novel posed to its readership, I will also explore the impact of the megatext on the implied, embedded readers.⁹² To the structural analysis of the available mythical intertexts I shall add a narratological parameter, paying particular attention to the function of focalisation, namely: from whose point of view a story is told or whom the external narrator favours.⁹³ This will prove a useful instrument in deciphering the novel's plot, since it illustrates how the external reader may have interpreted a myth on the basis of his or her internal/embedded reception and re-interpretation. While focalisation may have been encouraged or directed by the external narrator, it also depended on the reader, who might identify him/herself and subsequently focalise the plot through a chosen character.⁹⁴ Readers, as Cognitive Studies

as genres of narrative are only intellectual constructs, so is any typology. Broad definitions permit similar themes and plots to be included, so that, in the course of the history of the origins and development of a tradition, its different functions can be discerned. A precise analysis guarantees that variations in narrative tradition will not be reduced to simple multicultural similarities.'

92 Hunter 2008, 267. For the 'embedded reader's approach, as opposed to that of the external reader: see Morgan 1991 on Heliodorus; Egger 1994a on Chariton; see also Morales 2004 on Achilles Tatius, and Smith 2007a, esp. 12–17 for cultural focalisation with a useful introduction. Recently, see Guez 2009 Morgan 2009c; the otherwise more problematic is the collection of Paschalis, Panayotakis and Schmeling 2009, for a review of which see Kim 2011.

93 As an introduction see Allan 2000. On narratology see the general Brooks 1984, which is pivotal for my approach here, together with Morgan 2004b; see also Bal 2009.

94 For the merger of the focaliser and the narrator as an important narrative tool in understanding the Greek novel see also De Temmerman 2014, 26–29 and, most importantly, 42–46. For the overall narratological approach see Genette 1969, 191 and Genette 1972, 206–11, who first invent-

inform us, make a more or less conscious choice by taking the perspective of one or more characters.⁹⁵ Besides, empathy, the ability of the external and embedded readership to engage emotionally with the narrative is an important issue in understanding the different points of view of any story.⁹⁶ Equally, empathetic attachment to one or more focalisers might shift and influence the expectations of the internal and external readership.⁹⁷ Considering this evidence, the expectations of the novel's readership are shaped not only by the possible variants offered by the available mythical scenarios evoked but also by the viewpoint of the embedded readership, whose deciphering of the mythical megatext therefore offers a reflexive insight into the genre's understanding of myth in general and in each novel specifically.

Mythical narratives had been so manipulated by centuries of self-conscious mythical literature that, at least in the period I am studying here, it is difficult to place them into precise narrative templates or to distinguish them according to the genre in which they appear. Still, their megatexts are the crystallization of particular versions and sub-versions of these myths within a given historical and cultural context, so as to form a kind of narrative grammar about how these stories were told and received. But in order to assess that, we need to follow our novelistic heroines to the world's extremities, where they meet with Iphigenia and Helen, or to the world's cultural centres such as Athens, where they meet with Phaedra, or to the symbolic returning point, Penelope's Ithaca.

ed the word to demonstrate the difference between 'he who sees' and 'he who narrates'. For the contribution of the embedded characters as focalisers and their mediation towards the understanding of the story see Bal 2009, 145–65 and De Jong, Nünlist, and Bowie 2004, 31–36.

⁹⁵ Keen 2011 and Keen 2007, 39, 'The key term in the transformation of novel reading from a morally suspect waste of time to an activity cultivating the role-taking imagination, empathy, appeared in English as a translation of *Einfühlung* in the early twentieth century. Since then, its verb form, "to empathise", and its interchangeable adjectival spin-offs "empathic" and "empathetic", have passed into common parlance. In the twenty-first century, real human empathy enjoys good press as a concept and a desirable character trait (given the improved cultural status of emotional intelligence).' The moral impact of a story on its reader was already pointed out by Plato, e.g. *Rep.* 378a7–8.

⁹⁶ Cf. what is called 'partial perception' of the reader, that consists of a reader 'forgetting' details in the text because s/he favours a particular point of view, see Auyoung 2013 on *Anna Karenina*. For the empirical study of the reception of literature and the complicated paths of identification with one or more characters see Groeben and Christman 2014.

⁹⁷ Cf. Keen 2007 and Aldama 2010.

The bold and virginal: Iphigenia

The unfortunate Rebecca was conducted to the black chair placed near the pile. On her first glance at the terrible spot where the preparations were making for her dying a death alike dismaying to the mind and painful to the body, she was observed to shudder and shut her eyes, praying internally doubtless, for her lips moved though no speech was heard ... the Judges had now been two hours in the lists, awaiting in vain the appearance of a champion. It became the general opinion that no one would wage battle for an unhappy maiden.

(Sir Walter Scott, 1820, *Ivanhoe*, Chapter 43)

1.1 The myth of Iphigenia

In tales of love and adventure there are two things that pose a threat to the ‘happily ever after’ ending: the first is the death of the main protagonist, while the second, as I will discuss in the next chapter, is adultery – sometimes male but mainly female.⁹⁸ Sacrifice, execution and suicide all imperil the female protagonist and jeopardise the expected reunion of the couple. Near-death situations also add a voyeuristic touch,⁹⁹ especially given the universal – and particularly dominant in Greece – imagery that relates marriage and death.¹⁰⁰ Things are more complex, however, when a story presents a dead protagonist to begin with. And while a principal character might be expected to die at the middle or end of the plot, one that is already deceased in the first lines or chapters is extremely provocative and compelling. Surprisingly, this is the case of both Callirhoe in Chariton’s eponymous novel and of Heliodorus’ Chariclea, who, before the story really even begins is presented with her beloved apparently dead in her arms and begging for death herself at the hands of the Egyptian brigands. By placing death, or better, near-death, so close to the novel’s opening, the earliest and latest examples of the genre show that this theme was an uncircumscribed part of the novelistic adventures. And although the tragic death of a virginal beauty was

98 An earlier version of this chapter focusing on Heliodorus is published as Lefteratou 2013.

99 Voyeurism in the novel is analysed in Morales 2004; see also Bierl 2012b, esp.136–37.

100 Thoroughly discussed in Dowden 1989, other major approaches, especially on Greek drama, are Rehm 1994 and Burnett 1971, 22ff. On Alcestis’ sacrifice see Rosenmeyer 1963, 199. On the reaction of Euripidean characters vis-à-vis death see Loraux 1987, who distinguishes between dying mothers and wives and tragic virgins; see also Foley 2001, 172–200 on sacrificial virgins as daughters of statesmen; for sacrifice in Euripides see also O’ Connor-Visser 1987, Aretz 1999, and Kyriakou 2006.

commonplace in Greek myth, other than Iphigenia not too many girls are reported to have successfully escaped it.¹⁰¹

In this first chapter I would like to discuss near-death situations, which are centred on the theme of Maidens of Death, or the ‘Brides of Hades’, as Seaford (1987) calls their tragic *sœurs*.¹⁰² In his review of sacrifice in culture and literature, Huges (2007) understands human sacrifice as the ritual, religious sacrifice of a human which is used as a ‘powerful symbol’ to delineate the distance between culture and civilisation. On the other hand, ‘execution is rarely approximate to human sacrifice but it is perfectly possible for a writer to use the idea of human sacrifice powerfully to interpret the social or psychological dynamics of an execution’ as in the case of Rebecca’s execution in the *Ivanhoe* above. These social and psychological dynamics of the execution/near-death situation are precisely what the novels employ as their narrative booster. The theme of the maiden’s death might be directly patterned on the Iphigenia mythical megatext, with or without the influence of other folkloric elements.¹⁰³ In Greek literature, discussing sacrifice and death through the Iphigenia saga raises a set of questions about the limits and limitations of civilisation and civilised thought by contrasting the Greek and the barbarian or by discovering the barbarian in the Greek.¹⁰⁴ Iphigenia thus provides not only an opportunity to talk about what is Greek as opposed to barbarian and how male is different from female but also a unique occasion to discuss adventure and escape in life and death.

1.1.1 In the visual arts

The first three centuries CE showed enormous interest in depictions of the *Iphigenia in Aulis* (hereafter *IA*) and the *Iphigenia among the Taurians* (*IT*).¹⁰⁵ In the illustrations of the *IA*, with the notable exception of the painting in the House of the Tragic Poet at Pompeii in which Iphigenia is led to the sacrifice against her will

101 The parallel of Euripides’ *Andromeda* might appear here as characteristic of such situations. Indeed, the play opens with Andromeda chained to the rocks. However, unlike with the novelistic scenario, the audience of the play knows from myth that Perseus is on his way to save the maiden, thus no *Scheintod* is required.

102 Among the many discussions, see for example Rose 1925, Szepessy 1972 and Seaford 1987.

103 E.g. Schmeling (1988) 327f compares the *Scheintod* of novelistic heroines to Aarne-Thompson’s AT 990, ‘Revived from apparent death’.

104 For the acculturation mission of Iphigenia see Hall 2013a, 86–87.

105 For the artistic representations see Weitzmann 1941, Croisille 1963, and *LIMC* (*Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*) 5.1 s.v. ‘Iphigenia’.

as in Figure 1,¹⁰⁶ she is depicted consenting to her fate and following Odysseus or Diomedes willingly to the altar. Such is for example the *emblema* from D'Ampurias in modern Spain in Figure 2, which illustrates a submissive Iphigenia escorted to the altar among many onlookers, hinting at a transposition of the theatrical setting in visual terms. The western location of the *emblema* is not problematic since it seems to have been imported from Antioch or Athens, thus demonstrating the popularity of the theme across the Empire.¹⁰⁷ In both the painting from Pompeii and the *emblema*, the play's 'happier ending', namely Iphigenia's, is implied through the presence of a small deer that comes to replace the girl.



Figure 1: *The sacrifice of Iphigenia, probably inspired by Timanthes' work.* The maiden is carried unwillingly to the altar by Menelaus or Diomedes and Odysseus. Calchas leads the group while Agamemnon veils his face. In the sky Artemis brings the substitutive sacrificial deer. House of the Tragic Poet, Naples, Pompeii VI 8, 13, Croisille Pl. 25.1, *LIMC* Fig. 38, Courtesy of Jackie and Bob Dunn.



Figure 2: *Iphigenia is led to the altar by a large crowd of people.* Odysseus leads Iphigenia to the altar, to the altar together with Menelaus or Diomedes. Agamemnon turns his back to the scene. Artemis and the substitutive deer figure in the background. Achilles may be the naked man at the front. D'Ampurias mosaic, 1st c. CE or end of imperial period at the Museum of Ampurias, *LIMC* Fig. 39, Courtesy of Museu d'Arqueologia de Catalunya Empúries.

¹⁰⁶ Probably an echo of Timanthes' lost work. Discussion of the originality of the Roman copy in Perry 2002, 155–56.

¹⁰⁷ See Perelló 1979, 54. On the *emblema* and its Greek original see Blázquez 1993 and Dunbabin 1999, 145. See also the brief description in Kyriakou 2006, 46. *LIMC* 5.1 s.v. 'Iphigenia', Fig. 39, 719.