Late Byzantine and post-Byzantine Vernacular Love Poetry: 
An Overview*

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This paper examines love poetry from the late Byzantine and post-Byzantine periods as a distinct body of literature. To be precise, it provides a list of the known texts (which is certainly not complete) together with brief introductory notes on each and examples where necessary. A few of these texts (mainly distiches added by readers in manuscripts) are presented for the first time for discussion as part of this corpus. Furthermore, the paper looks at issues such as their treatment by previous scholars and possible reasons why the love poetry from this period is meagre. Overall, it aims to open up a discussion on possible new approaches to the topic.

* This study of love poems began to take shape while I was in Hamburg in 2001 as a fellow of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, preparing a critical edition of a collection of love poems (Στίχοι περί ἐρωτός ἀγάπης: Κατάλογια). Once again I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the Foundation’s most generous assistance. However, most of the corpus of works listed here derives from two ARC-funded research projects at the Department of Modern Greek, University of Sydney; their chief investigators were Michael and Elizabeth Jeffreys and Alfred Vincent (part of the

Preliminaries

In this paper I will be using the term love poetry to refer specifically to compositions, mostly quite brief, which deal with the emotional experiences of persons in love, their longings or sufferings, their views on their loved one and on love in general, their wishes and desires, their grief at the loss of the lover and so on. Certainly, at least three of them (see below nos. a.1b, b.6 and b.7) contain a simple story, although the emphasis is placed on lyrical aspects and on the description of emotional situations. Hence I will not discuss the love romances (ερωτικά μυθιστορήματα) as a whole, since they are narrative rather than lyrical in form, even though love is certainly the central theme in their plots. Besides, these works belong to a genre of their own. However, I will include some poems and songs which form part of the text of the romances, and which are supposed to have been written and/or sung by characters in the narrative. These texts form a special category in the list I provide below. I will also exclude the dramatic works of the Cretan and Heptanesian School. By poetry I simply refer to anything written in verse, without implying any judgement of quality. Applied to early modern Greek literature it is obviously a very inclusive term, since the vast majority of what we consider early modern Greek literature is written in verse.

In quantitative terms and in comparison to their western counterparts, the surviving texts of late Byzantine and post-Byzantine vernacular love poetry are very few in number.\(^1\) Altogether there are

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\(^1\) It is worth noting that the number of love romances is also small. Moreover, apart from Livistros and Rodamni and Imperios and Margarona, which appear to have been popular (the former is found in a considerable number of manuscripts, the latter was published in a printed edition in Venice in 1543 and was reprinted at least fourteen times up to 1779), the other romances are transmitted in one or two manuscripts each and seem to have fallen into oblivion at an early stage. (I would like to thank
five collections of poems, or rather anthologies, varying in length and in style; three short independent poems; and several fragments found scattered around the margins or flyleaves of manuscripts or in spaces left blank by the scribes, written usually by readers and/or owners of the manuscripts. Regarding their preservation, we must note that, with two exceptions, each of these poems is found in only one manuscript. Is there a special reason for this phenomenon? Were Greeks in this period not interested in love poetry? Was love poetry an exclusively oral creation, usually not considered serious enough to be written down and copied in manuscripts? Can we speak at all of a tradition of love poetry in early modern Greek literature, apart from the romances?

Before we begin to answer these questions, I will give a brief account of the surviving works and will discuss how love poetry has been presented by scholars since the late nineteenth century, when late Byzantine and post-Byzantine vernacular literature first became a subject of systematic research.

Works:

I have divided the corpus into the following four categories:

a. collections;

b. independent short narrative poems;

c. independent short lyric poems and fragments (many of these are in fact extracts from longer poems);

d. poems embedded in romances and other works (these include mainly songs and the so-called love letters).

2 These are the Rhyme of girl and boy (Ριμάδα κόρης και νιου) and a variant of the One hundred words [of love] (Εκατόλογα [της αγάπης]). For their manuscripts see below, footnotes 15 and 23.
This type of categorisation is understandably schematic rather than generic. However, for the purpose of this study I found it more useful, as well as safer, to present the works by using general, mainly external characteristics, rather than placing them according to their genre and/or sub-genre. A more thorough investigation is needed to determine which of these texts are, for example, clearly distiches or fragments from alphabets or other longer poems. Besides, prior to this, the definitions of genres need to be established.

What follows is a list of the poems in the four categories with a short historical and literary introduction to each and a few brief examples for some of the works. For ease of reference I have given each item a number.

**a. Collections**

1. **Verses on passionate love: Love Songs (Στίχοι περί ἐρωτός αγάπης: Καταλόγια; Henceforth Katalogia).** The collection is found in a late fifteenth-century manuscript (British Library, Additional 8241, ff. 165r–200v), which also contains two vernacular romances, the *Achilleid* and *Phlorios and Platziaphlora*. The manuscript is the work of a copyist, so we have no information on the identity of the poet(s) or the compiler; nor do we know the exact place of composition. For the latter an Aegean island has been suggested, most likely the island of Rhodes. However, scholars who regard the city of Constantinople as a major literary metropolis have indicated

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3 Καταλόγι (or κατελόγιν and καταλογίτσιν) in medieval Greek has various meanings and is used to describe different kinds of works, including poems, songs and even proverbs. See: Kriaras, 1982:19. Linos Politis (21975:152) states that the word means mainly a “folk song (usually love song)”. Hence he, like others before him, considers the poems in this collection to be folk songs. However, it is interesting that when he discusses the poems in the Vienna codex (see below) he describes them as “love poems” and in brackets “καταλόγια”.

4 In this paper I will be using the text from the edition I am preparing; the division into individual poems and their numbering is also according to my edition.

5 This was first suggested by Wagner and it was later taken up by the Rhodian Papachristodoulou (1966). We must note that both scholars’ arguments on this issue
this as a possible birthplace.\(^6\) The collection contains 56 poems in total and is usually known either as *Erotopaïnia* (*Ερωτοπαίγνια* = Love games) or *Alphabet of love* (*Αλφάβητος της αγάπης*). Both titles were arbitrarily given by the previous editors, Wilhelm Wagner (1879) and D. C. Hesseling and Hubert Pernot (1913).\(^7\) The title which I prefer to use (*Στίχοι περί έρωτος αγάπης: Καταλόγια*) is the one found in the actual manuscript.\(^8\)

This is one of the most important collections of love poems in early modern Greek literature. Soon after the appearance of its first modern edition in 1879, it attracted the attention of Neohellenists from all around Europe and some of the poems were even translated into various European languages.\(^9\) It also gave rise to a lively scholarly debate, mostly about its influences and birthplace.\(^10\)

Giorgos Martinis in a more recent study (1990) claimed that the collection is part of a Rhodian romance written possibly by the fifteenth-century scholar Agapitos Kassianos. This work, according to Martinis, is for the literary production of Rhodes an equivalent to the Cretan *Erotokritos*; and he names it “The maiden” (“Η λυγερή”) (Martinis, 1990). Although this is perhaps an attractive view for Rhodian scholars, it is totally ungrounded.

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\(^6\) See e.g. Papadopoullos, 1977:193.

\(^7\) See: Wagner, 1879 (the edition is accompanied by a German verse translation) and Hesseling & Pernot, 1913. This edition was also accompanied by a French translation in prose.

\(^8\) The title of this collection is the focus of a study that I am preparing on the titles of early modern Greek literary texts.

\(^9\) In addition to Wagner's and Hesseling & Pernot's German and French translations, translations of some poems appeared in Hungarian by Közlöny in 1906, in Italian by Palumbo in 1882, in English by Tozer in 1880, and again in German by Lübke in 1897.

\(^10\) Georgios Sotiriadis, for example, in a study on *Erotokritos*, stated that the poems were influenced by western love poetry (1909); in response to this Nikolaos Politis claimed that the poems are purely Greek folk songs and there is not a drop of foreign influence, especially western (N. Politis, 1909a:56–57).
The Katalogia is the oldest surviving collection of early modern Greek love poems. Love, passion, lust and sexual desire are among the chief concerns of its two young lovers — especially the young man. These issues give the impetus for the development of the poems. In the following short poem the young man appeals to all those who have experienced the sufferings of love and describes an intense sexual encounter, although his tone changes dramatically soon after; he now addresses his loved one, presenting himself as the victim of an unrequited love because of his pitiless beloved:

Ν’ ακούσετε, όσοι επάθετε πολλά διά την αγάπην:
βεργόλικην εφίλησα μίαν νύκταν, μίαν εσπέραν,
κ’ εμύριζαν οι αγκάλες της πλέον παρά τον μόσχον,
Και ακόμη από τα χνώτα της τα στήθη μου μυρίζουν,
και εκ τα γλυκία φιλήματα τα χείλη μου γλυκία ’ναι·
και τώρ’ απεχωρίστημεν, αλι, και τι να γένω!
Εδ’ αρρωστώ και κρίνομαι, ψυχομαχώ και πέφτω,
και τ’ όνομά σου θέλω πει και θέλω εξεψυχιάσει,
διά να σε κράζουν φόνισσαν και ψυχοπαραδότριαν,
διατί επαρέδωκεν ψυχήν η εδική σου αγάπη.

(Π. 598–607)

In terms of form the collection consists of:

(a) Three “alphabets”. This is a popular form with a long tradition in ecclesiastical and moral edifying poetry; however, this is the first time that it appears in love poetry.11 A distinct feature in two of the

11 In “alphabet” poems the first line of each section or stanza (usually a distich) begins with a different letter in alphabetical order, starting with Α, so that the total length of the poem should be 24 stanzas (the number of letters in the Greek alphabet). The “alphabet” is known to the Byzantine literary tradition from as far back as the sixth century. According to Hunger (1992:491) this form was first introduced by the Patriarch of Jerusalem Sophronios (560–638 CE).
alphabets in our collection is a kind of dialogue between the young people in love (the νεότερος and the λυγερή as they are presented by the narrator). Unfortunately, in all three alphabets some letter-stanzas are missing. This makes it difficult to follow the lovers’ argument, especially in the first one where a considerable number are lacking.

(b) One set of “εκατόλογα της αγάπης” (or “one hundred words of love”). In this conventional form each “word” is actually a distich or in our collection a short stanza beginning with a word denoting a different number, in sequence, starting with 1, then 2, 3 and so on. This is the lengthiest poem in the collection (155 lines), and it consists of a prologue, a main body and an epilogue. It is a narrative poem; the story is as follows: A young man is in love with a beautiful maiden. He confesses his passion to her, but she refuses to accept it because she finds him too young and inexperienced. The young man insists and, after a request-challenge by the woman, he has to tell her one hundred “words” to demonstrate his love. When he reaches the number 10, the woman interrupts and asks him to continue his numerical composition by tens, that is, beginning with the numbers 20, 30 and so on. Finally, after arriving at the target of 100, he makes love to her and then begins to ridicule her. The following passage, which is the epilogue of the poem, is undoubtedly an anti-climax to the young man’s passion for the maiden as well as to his “one hundred words” composition:

Καὶ απέ το χέρι την κρατεῖ και στο κλινάριν πάσιν,
καὶ χόρτασέν την το φιλί, ως το πολλά πεθύμαν.
Καὶ απότις την εφίλησεν, στέκει και αναγέλα την.
Καὶ τότε πάλι η λυγερή τα δάκρυα την επήραν:
“Αν το ’χα ξεύρειν, άγουρε, και λιθοκάρδιος είσαι,
και ψεύτης και αντιλογητής, και οπού φιλείς κομπώνεις,
δεν σε ’χα δώσει το φιλίν, αν είχες του ηλίου τα κάλλη!”

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In its concept the “Hundred words” is a form related to the “alphabet”. Compositions of this type became very popular in folk poetry of later periods. There are numerous examples or versions from various parts of the Greek world (including Cyprus and Rhodes). This form is also used in western European literature (Hesseling & Pernot, 1913:xviii–xxi; Bolte, 1901:376–406).

(c) Two “love-letters” or “πιττάκια”. Love-letter poems usually begin with the stereotypical phrase “My love, I’m sending you a letter” (“Χαρτί σου στέλνω, μάτια μου”). This form appears in the romances and must also have been a popular one, to judge from the fact that poems in the love-letter form appear in other collections or as free-standing works (see example in c.8 below). It is possible, of course, that the two “πιττάκια” in our collection may have been originally love letters in a romance.

(d) The rest of the poems can be described according to their content. They are either a lover’s complaints (it is mainly the young girl who complains about her lover’s unfaithfulness or betrayal and abandonment) or poems in praise of the loved one (usually the young man praises the beauty of his lady). Among these is a poem which I consider to be one of the best of its kind. It is rich in metaphors (some of which appear to be unique to it) and demonstrates the poet’s aesthetics:
Finally, one other important aspect of this collection, which distinguishes it from the others, is that many lines express a female perspective or at least are supposed to be uttered by the female lover.

2. **The Vienna collection.** This collection is found in one of the most important manuscripts for early modern Greek literature, which contains thirty vernacular texts, including the romances *Imperios and Margarona, Livistros and Rodamni, Phlorios and Platziaphlora, The war of Troy*, and Akontianos’ *Apollonios* (Vienna, Staatsbibliothek, Theologicus graecus 244, ff. 130v–131v, 324v–326v, 330r–331v; Panayotopoulou-Doulaveras, Vicky 2005. Late Byzantine and post-Byzantine Vernacular Love Poetry: An Overview. In E. Close, M. Tsianikas and G. Frazis (eds.) "Greek Research in Australia: Proceedings of the Biennial International Conference of Greek Studies, Flinders University April 2003", Flinders University Department of Languages - Modern Greek: Adelaide, 81-118. Archived at Flinders University: dspace.flinders.edu.au
first quarter of the sixteenth century). The collection carries no title; it is anonymous and contains mainly love poems, 153 in total. It was edited by Hubert Pernot in 1931 with the title *Chansons populaires grecques des XVe et XVIe siècles*. In this edition Pernot includes the poem *Rhyme of girl and boy* which is also found in the manuscript (no. 118 in his edition, see below b.7). The majority of the poems are distiches (105 in total), or vary from three to five lines (25 poems). There is also one poem written in the form of an alphabet (no. 11), and four in the form of a love letter (nos. 2, 3, 46, 50). There is an obvious and strong connection between this collection and the previous one, since some poems occur, with minor variations, in both, and there are also identical phrases and imagery. However, it is also evident that the ideology on passionate love differs greatly between the two; the Vienna collection is nearer to the modern Greek folk tradition:

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Άσπρο μετάξι γαρμιζί, χρυσάφι από την Πόλιν,
και σύρμα από τον Γαλατάν, τι μου είσαι χολιασμένη;
Θαρρείς για δεν σε χαιρετώ, για δεν σου συντυχαίνω
για δεν φιλώ τα χείλη σου, θαρρείς κακίαν σού θέλω;
Μέσα η καρδιά μου σ’ αγαπάει, τα χείλη μου σε ψέγουν,
κι ο λογισμός μου λέγει μου: “Χριστέ μου, να σε φιλέρουν”.
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(poem no. 44)

1 γαρμιζί: dark red, crimson

3. *The Naples collection*. This collection is also found in a manuscript which contains several important vernacular works, including Marinos Falieros’ poems, and two romances, the *Achilleid* and *Imperios and Margarona* (Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, graecus III B 27, ff. 118r–121r, 124v; sixteenth century). It is transmitted anonymously without a title and contains only six poems, four of which are written in eight-syllable verse. According to Linos Politis, the collection is a product of sixteenth-century Crete; he also considers the poems to be love songs (L. Politis, 1977:153). The editor,
Georgios Zoras, who presents them as “demotic poems by an unknown author”, also states that Crete, in particular Eastern Crete, is the probable birthplace of the poems, but he does not exclude the possibility of some other island in the Aegean or some other place under Frankish or Venetian rule (Zoras, 1955:7). Regarding the poet, Zoras suggests that

Since the collection is in the same manuscript as Falieros’ Love Dream (see below, b.1) it has been suggested that he could have been the poet (van Gemert, 1980:22). If this is correct, we are able to set the chronological boundaries of the collection with more precision and connect it to a known writer. In any case, there is no doubt about the collection’s western influence, especially in the first three poems. All poems express the male lover’s emotions, desires and sufferings. The following small passage from the third poem gives the reader an idea of the spirit in which the compositions of this collection are written. The poet-lover presents his wounding by Cupid’s arrows as a fortunate event. Moreover, he sees his submission to his beloved as positive, and for this he glorifies Cupid:

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\begin{align*}
K' \; \text{έρωτας} \; \text{μου} \; \text{το} \; ' \chiε \; \text{πλήξει}, \\
\; \text{πας} \; k' \; \text{ηβάλθη} \; \text{να} \; \text{με} \; \text{πλήξει}, \\
\; \mu' \; \text{ένα} \; \text{πέτασμα} \; \text{kai} \; \text{χάρη} \\
\; \text{άπλωσεν} \; \text{eis} \; \text{το} \; \text{δοξάρι}, \\
\; \text{kai} \; \text{χρουσή} \; \text{σαίττα} \; \text{πίασε} \\
\; k' \; \text{eis} \; \text{eμέ} \; \text{η} \; \text{εκοκκίασε} \\
\; \text{βλέποντας} \; \text{tis} \; \text{εμορφίες} \; \text{σου}, \\
\; \text{kai} \; \text{tis} \; \text{γλυκοχάριτες} \; \text{σου}, \\
\; \text{βλέποντας}, \; \text{kερά}, \; \text{tα} \; \text{μάτια}, \\
\end{align*}
\]
τα 'χει ο έρωτας παλάτια. 10
Κ’ έσυρε κ’ εξόδεψέ με
και για σεν εδούλωσέ με.
Το λοιπόν, άξια πανώρα,
από σήμερον και τώρα
είμαι δούλος έμπιστός σου,
πάντοτε στον ορισμό σου,
σ’ ὀ,τι θέλεις να δουλεύγω
κ’ εκ τον ορισμό να μη έβγω.
Και γιατ’ είδα το καλό μου,
επαινώ το ριζικό μου
και τον έρωτα δοξάζω
ὡς γιατί, καθώς λογιάζω,
έκανέ με ν’ αγαπήσω
πλάσμα όμορφον περίσσο [...]

(III, ll. 11–34)

6 εκοκκιάσε: aimed

4. The Cypriot love poems (or Ρίμες αγάπης). This collection is also untitled and anonymous (Venice, Marcianus graecus IX 32 (coll. 1287), ff. 3r–90r). It comprises 156 poems and was written in Cyprus between 1546 and 1570, at the time when the island was still under Venetian rule. This collection can be described as the swan song of the Cypriot literature from this period. The collection differs greatly from all the others: it is written in the Cypriot dialect and its poems are directly influenced by the works of the Italian poet Petrarch and his imitators. A modern edition came out in 1952 with a French translation of the poems by Thémis Siapkaras-Pitsillidès.12 A significant number of poems (23 in total)

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12 The 1952 edition was followed by another by the same editor in 1975; the following year (1976) she presented the Greek public with an edition in which she also provides a translation into modern Greek. Previously Émile Legrand had also edited a few of poems (1881:58–93). The title Ρίμες Αγάπης (Chansons d’amour) is Siapkaras-Pitsillidès’ invention, though she assumes that some such title might have been given originally to the collection by the poet himself (1980:68).
were identified by the editor as translations of Petrarch's poems and eight as translations of other well-known Petrarchan poets (i.e. Serafino dall’Aquila, P. Sasso, A. Tibaldeo, P. Bembo, J. Sannazaro, B. Castiglione, Ariosto and B. Cappello); the rest are also written in the style and manner of this “tradition” (Siapkaras-Pitsillidès, 1975: 2). So far, probably due to its very different language and style, there is no study on its relation to the other Greek collections of love poetry. It is also interesting to note that in the anthologies of early modern Greek literature the collection is always placed in a separate category under its place of origin. In the following poem the god of Love (Πόθος) is presented as a blind boy, who avoids looking the female lover in the eyes for fear of dying from love; it is for that reason that he sends his arrows with his eyes shut! The blind Eros is similar to that of Marinos Falieros (see below b.6):

Έβγαλε, Πόθε, κείνον το πιντέλλιν
κ’ίτσου τυφλά τινάν πιον μεν δοξεύγεις;
μηδέν γινίσκεσαι τυφλόν κοπέλλιν
και δίχα να θωρείς πιον μεν παιδεύγεις.
Αμμ’ εγώ ξεύρω γιάντα 'σαι χαέλλιν
και την ποθώ να δεις ουδέν γυρεύγεις:
γιατί αν τηδ δεις ποθαίνεις αγαπώντα·
γι’ αυτόν δοξεύγεις κι αχτυπάς καμμόντα.

(poem no. 46)

5 καμμόντα: with your eyes shut

5. The Mt Athos collection. This is a collection of thirteen folksongs, of which only six are love songs (nos. 1, 2, 3, 9, 11, 13). Again we know nothing of the collector’s identity, except that he must have been an educated person, perhaps a priest, monk or church cantor, since he was able to write out the music of the songs in Byzantine

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notation. The story of this collection is indeed interesting; the folios containing the songs were used to reinforce the binding of another manuscript. They were discovered by its first editor Spyridon Lambros in 1880. The following song is a variant of a popular folksong, widely known in Greece even today. The flower amaranth (literally “unfading”), which has been widely used in western literature as a symbol of eternal values, is presented in this song as having opposite effects:

Θωρείς τον τον αμάραντον πώς κρέμεται στο βράχο και τρων τον τ’άγρια πρόβατα και λησμονούν τ’αρνιά τους; Και απ’ αύτόν έφαγα κ’εγώ και απαλησμόνησά σε. “Ειπέ μοι πού έπιες το νερόν και πού έφας το βοτάνι;” “Στην Άρταν έπια το νερόν, στην Κύπρον το βοτάνι, και ανάμεσα στο Γαλατάν απαλησμόνησά σε.” (song no. 13)

b. Narrative love poems

These are works which contain some kind of story, although they are quite short and do not belong to the genre of the romance.

6. Love Dream (Ερωτικόν Ενύπνιον). The poem consists of 130 lines and is found, as we have mentioned, in the same manuscript as the third collection of love poems (ms: Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale, 14 See: Lambros, 1914–1915. There is a more recent edition by Bertrand Bouvier (1995).

In one modern version the theme is again about forgetfulness, but it is a love song: Πια ιδές τον τον αμάραντον σε τι γκρεμό φυτρώνει, / φυτρώνει μες στα αλίσβατα, στις πέτρες, τα λιθάρια · / τον τρών’ τ’αλάφια και ψοφούν, τ’αρκούδια και ημερεύουν, / τον τρών’ τα λάγια πρόβατα και λησμονούν τ’αρνιά τους’ / να το ’τρωγε και η μάνα μου, να μη με κάνει εμένα. This variant was sung to me by Constandinos and Nick Panagiotopoulos; I would like to thank them both. I was unable to find the meaning of the word “αλίσβατα”; I conjecture from the context that it means “wildness”.

16 See Ferber, 1999:10–11.


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This is the only work which has been attributed to a specific poet, the well-known Cretan writer Marinos Falieros (1395–1474). It is written in the form of a letter. The poet writes to a friend about his love longing and about a dream that he has had, hoping that it will bring him happiness. It belongs to the “love dream” sub-genre, which was popular in western European literature (van Gemert, 1980:42–45). In this poem the story revolves around a dream of love that ends abruptly just before fulfilment. The narrator is woken by the early morning crowing of a rooster. The following passage describes the god of Love, Eros, who is responsible for the union of the two lovers. Personified Love is also found in the romances (e.g. Livistro and Rodamni); however, in contrast to the romances, where he is presented as a fierce ruler, in this poem his gaze is sweet and kind, though his arrows are no less deadly:

Πε με, κυρά, τις έναι αυτός πόχεις για συντροφία με τα χρυσόλαμπρα φτερά, με τ’ όμορφο δοξάρι; Λέγει με: “Αυτός έν’ ο Ἐρωτας οπόχει τόση χάρη. Αυτός μας έσμιξε τα δύο με το γλυκό του βλέμμα και με τό τόξο του που ρωτάς μας έσφαξεν το πνέμα”. 5
Κι εγώ τ’ ακούσει εστέναξα κι εδάκρυσεν το φως μου εβλέποντας τον Έρωτα με το δοξάρι ομπρός μου. Δένω γοργό τας χείρας μου, τρέχω και προσκυνώ τον, τρέμοντας και δειλιάζοντας όλος παρακαλώ τον για να μου δώσει χάριτα, θάρρος για να κερδέσω το πεθυμά η καρδίτσα μου και η ψυχή μου απέσω. 10

(ll. 40–50)

17 This poem, together with the Story and Dream (Ἰστορία και ὠνείρον), also by Falieros, was edited by Arnold van Gemert (1980).

18 After comparing the Love Dream to the Story and Dream, van Gemert maintains that the former is the work of an inexperienced poet, and if it is indeed Falieros’ work, it must have been written at an early stage. Overall he doubts whether Falieros is the author (1980:31, 32).
7. *Rhyme of girl and boy* (Ριμάδα κόρης και νιου), 194 lines. This is perhaps the only poem that is found in two manuscripts, one of which (Ambros. Y 89 supra) also contains two of Falieros’ works (the *Story and Dream* and the *Rhyme of Consolation*). It has been noted by Stylianos Alexiou that “in terms of its form, its language and its theme [the poem] recalls Falieros’ two dream poems” (Alexiou, 1969:82). Arnold van Gemert, the editor of Falieros’ *Love Dreams*, tends to agree partially with this (he is not fully convinced about the language) and adds further that the poem has “the same roots as [Falieros’] *Story and Dream* (Ιστορία και όνειρο)” (van Gemert, 1980:23). Its story is as follows: a young man asks a maiden for a kiss, but she demands a ring first. He tells her that this is never going to happen; however, he continues to pursue her. One night he enters her room uninvited and rapes her. The young woman wakes up, laments the loss of her virginity and curses him:

καὶ μέσα στές αγκάλες της τον ἁγουρόν ετήρα
κ’ ἐκλαίγεν κ’ ἐβαραίνετον στη δολερή της μοίρας
καὶ πέρδικα μοιρολογά καὶ σαν τρυγόνα κλαίγει
καὶ πρὸς αὐτὸν τον νιότερον τούτα τα λόγια λέγει:

“A βουληθεῖς να μ’ αρνηθείς και να μ’ αλησμόνησες,
εἰς τὴν Τουρκία, στα σίδερα, πολλά ν’ αγανακτήσεις,
σε τούρκικα σπαθιά βρεθείς, σε Κατελάνου χέρια,
τα κριάτα σου να κόφτουσι με δίστομα μαχαίρια,
Ἀράπηδες να σ’ εύρουσι και Μώροι να σε σώσου
κ’ εἰς όχλον σαρακήνικον τρεις μαχαίριες σου δώσου,
oi δυο ν’ αγγίζου στην καρδιά κ’ ή άλλη στα μυαλά σου
κ’ εἰς τὸν αφρόν τῆς θάλασσας να βρούσι τα μαλλιά σου.”

(ll. 730-741)

6 σίδερα: prison, chains   6 αγανακτήσεις: suffer   8 κριάτα: flesh   9 Μώροι: Moors

Finally, in connection with this poem, especially its ending, it is worth noting that a recent study (Kakridis, 2000) has demonstrated the existence of a whole tradition of poems and folksongs containing curses on the departing lover, going back to the seventh century BCE. In particular, there are obvious similarities to an "Epode" (79a) by the lyric poet from Paros, Archilochos. However, the source for the Cretan poet of the Rhyme is not Archilochos' Epode, but a popular poem or song from his own time.20

c. Other short poems and fragments

8. A fine and lovely "verse" to write to a maiden (Στίχος ωραίος και καλός να γράψεις προς την κόρη). The poem consists of 38 lines; it become known fairly recently in 1987 when it was edited by Anna di Benedetto-Zimbone. The poem is found in the manuscript which contains version V of the vernacular romance Livistros and Rodamni (Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana graecus 2391, ff. 153r–155r; second half of the fifteenth century). It is in the love-letter form; the male lover extols the beauty of his lady and tells her that it was Eros who instructed him or rather forced him to write this:21

Βασιλικόν πανεύοσμον, ἀμπαρι μος κυλοφόρε,
εἰρήνη της καρδίας μου, γαλήνη της ψυχής μου,
ανθός καρδίας της εμής και της ψυχής μου δρόσος,
γραφή τ᾽ εκ γράφω εκ ψυχής, εμή παρηγορία·
ην ἐγραψαν οι χείρες μου, συνέθηκεν ο νους μου,
5
μετὰ μεγάλου στεναγμοῦ, μετὰ μεγάλου πόθου·
αφοῦ γαρ ενετράνισα και είδα την θεωρίαν σου
και είδα τα πανήδονα κάλλη τα εικά σου,

20 The same view was expressed by Nikolaos Politis (1958:257–58).
21 Love-letter poems are described elsewhere as “γράμματα”, “γραφή”, “χαρτίν” and “πιττάκιν”; see: Agapitos, 1991:213.
9. **The abandoned woman of Chania (Η απαρνημένη των Χανίων).** This poem is found in an early sixteenth-century manuscript containing theological material (Oxford, Bodleian Library Baroccianus graecus 216, f. 179r). It consists of eighteen lines; it is also anonymous, though the frequent deletions, additions and corrections above the lines in the manuscript, all apparently made by the writer of the main text, lead us to assume that we are dealing with an autograph. The poet is Cretan, perhaps from the city of Chania. In this poem a young woman expresses her anguish at her abandonment by her lover. The poem’s first editor, Nikolaos G. Politis, suggested that it really is the work of a woman who perhaps wished that her lover would listen to it or read it. Linos Politis expresses the opposite view, that the autograph poem “does not express the longing (καημός) of a real-life abandoned woman” (1958:303), but “is the poetic creation of a learned poet” (1958:305). Since the poem shows similarities to Theocritus’ second *Idyll*, he assumes that *The abandoned woman of Chania* is “a conscious attempt at adaptation” (1958:305).

Αλέμονον η τάλαινα, πώς άρξομαι του λόγου, 

της τύχης μου της πονηράς το παν ειπείν καθ’ όλου; 

Τις μου την θλίψιν εξέλει, τίνος αυτό θαρρέσω;

---

και τις ακούσαι δύναται, και τούτω μεν αρέσω;
Την φλόγα, την πολλήν πυράν, την έχει η καρδιά μου, 5
τις να την σβέσει δυνηθεί και να ’ν’ παρηγοριά μου;
Τις να γιατρεύσει την πληγήν, την έχ’ ο απατός μου,
tην μόδωκεν, αλίμονον, κι έσφαξε τα εντός μου;

(ll. 1–8)

1 τάλαινα: wretched 3 εξελεί: take away, remove 7 ο απατός μου: myself

10. White-skinned, fair-haired and beautiful (Ασπρη ξανθή πανέμονο-
στη). Although this poem consists of only seven lines, it is perhaps
one of the best known poems of its kind. It is found in a fifteenth-
century manuscript and it is possible that it is the oldest early
modern Greek love poem.23 It was edited by Spyridon Lambros in
1894. The poem presents the sorrow of a young girl, because her
loved one has departed on a long trip:

Άσπρη ξανθή πανέμονστη ο κύρκας της ταξιδεύει,
και υπάγει ο κύρκας της μακρεά και το ταξίδιν μέγα.24
Και η κόρη από της λύπης της τους μήνας καταράται:
“να κεις Φλεβάρη, φλέγεις με, και Μάρτι, εμάρανές με·
Απρίλι απριλοφόρητε και Μα κατακαμμένε,
τον κόσμον και αν εγέμισες τ’ αθίτσια και τα ρόδα,
tην ιδικήν μου την καρδιάν τους πόνους και τα δάκρυα”.

1 πανέμονστη: very pretty 1 κύρκας: loved one 4 κεις (=καείς): burn 5 Μα: May
6 αθίτσια: little flowers

11. Be joyful, meadows, be joyful, be joyful for my loved one (Χαίρεσθε,
κάμποι, χαίρεσθε, χαίρεσθε τον καλόν μου).25 This is a song: its text
in the manuscript is accompanied by its music, which is written

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24 The first two lines are printed here with the corrections made by Stylpon P. Kyriakides
(1923:342), the rest of the poem is from Lambros' edition (1894).


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out in Byzantine notation by the well-known calligrapher and composer monk Leontios Koukouzelis. However, Koukouzelis is not its poet. It is interesting to note that in the previous folios there is a lengthy Persian love song in Greek characters, which also has its melody written out in Byzantine notation. The Greek song consists of 24 lines and is written in the form of a dialogue between two lovers. It is dated to the year 1562 and considered by its editor G. P. Stathis to be the oldest known modern Greek folksong (Stathis, 1977). It is a delightful song, rich in imagery and metaphors:

Χαίρεσθε, κάμποι, χαίρεσθε,
χαίρεσθε τον καλόν μου·
περδίκια κακανίσετε
κι αποκοιμίσετέ τον.

Ντος τι γιαλλαλλί ντος τουμ
gialallallalle
tarailestone ntops tonum
 giajialale talallallalle
tarla tarla tanatrine.

Δάφνη και μερσίνη εσύ 'σαι
kai ta phylla sou myriou'n
kai ta phylla sou myriou'n
kai cheimou'n' kai kalokaïri. [...]
to its first modern editor Manoussacas (1975:255–274) the song is a “pure” folksong.26

HESTOE MOU TINAGAPTO, H DOTE MOU TINAGTHELO

Η ΚΑΜΕΤΕ ΜΟΥ ΜΑΓΙΚΑ, ΝΑ ΤΗΝ AΛΗΣΜΟΝΗΣΟ.
ΦΟΡΗΣΕΤΕ ΜΟΥ ΣΙΔΕΡΑ ΚΑΙ ΖΩΣΤΕΤΕ ΜΕ ΒΑΤΟ,
ΝΑ ΜΕ ΒΑΡΟΥΝ ΤΑ ΣΙΔΕΡΑ, ΝΑ ΜΕ ΣΚΕΠΑΖΕΙ Ο ΒΑΤΟΣ
ΚΑΙ ΒΑΛΕΤΕ ΕΙΣ ΤΟΝ ΚΟΛΠΟΝ ΜΟΥ ΤΡΙΚΕΦΑΛΟΝ ΟΦΙΔΙ, 5
ΝΑ ΜΕ ΔΑΚΑΝΕΙ ΤΟ ΘΗΡΙΟΝ, ΝΑ ΤΗΝ AΛΗΣΜΟΝΗΣΟ.

5 κόλπον: bosom 6 δακάνει: bite

All the following poems and/or songs are later additions made in manuscripts by owners and readers. We can assume that the ones that are found in the Meteora manuscripts are written by monks or other laymen who served in the monasteries (Baroutas, 1997).27 This should not shock the reader; love poetry recorded by monks should be seen as an outlet for their otherwise suppressed sexuality.

13. The “One hundred words of love” ("Εκατόλογα της αγάπης") of Meteora.28 It consists of 72 lines and is a variant of the fourth poem of the Katalogia collection (see a.1). Its beginning is different from that in the Katalogia: the young man addresses the young woman in a more provocative, almost insulting manner:

"ΠΑΡΕΚΕ ΣΤΑΣΟΥ, ΚΟΡΗ ΜΟΥ,
ΜΗΝ ΚΥΨΩ ΚΑΙ ΦΙΛΗΣΩ ΣΕ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΣ ΑΓΚΑΣΤΡΩΜΕΝΗ
ΚΑΙ ΠΑΣ ΠΑΙΔΙ ΤΗΝ ΜΑΝΝΑ ΣΟΥ ΚΙ ΕΓΓΟΝΙ ΤΟΝ ΚΥΡΗ ΣΟΥ."
(ll. 8–11)

26 See also Manoussacas, 1982–1984 where he compares this to other variants of folksongs from later periods.

27 On the wooden boards of the binding of another Meteora manuscript (Barlaam Monastery 27) there is a twelve-line poem, the content of which is extremely ribald. Here according to Baroutas (1997:293) “εκδηλώνεται η έντονη σκωπτική και χυδαία διάθεση ορισμένων να χλευάσουν, να διακωμωθούν, ακόμα και να σκανδαλίσουν τους μοναχούς με τα γραφόμενα τους [...] γι’ αυτό δεν είναι λίγοι οι βέβηλοι και αισχροί στίχοι”.


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14. How doomed from birth by fate, how unlucky I am (Ἀμοιρος που γεννήθηκα και αριζικος οπου 'μαι).\textsuperscript{29} The poem consists of ten distiches; a young man expresses his sufferings from an unfulfilled love. Its editor, Nikos Veis, considered its distiches as autonomous texts and entitles them “Distiches of love” (“Δίστιχα της αγάπης”) (Veis, 1910:216). Surprisingly, he also included a distich from another manuscript (see below no. 16).

15. I set out to show my sufferings to my love (Αρχίνησα την ηγαπώ τους πόνους μου να δείξω): six lines.\textsuperscript{30} This is a fragment of an alphabet, containing a distich for each of the first three letters. The first two distiches are written again on another folio (f. 73v). Obviously, the anonymous writer wrote down the lines from memory.

16. I wish I could kiss your lips (Ας σ’ εφίλουν εις τα χείλη): two lines.\textsuperscript{31} This distich together with the following one is written straight after the “One hundred words of love” (see above no. 12) by the same hand. Veis, for reasons that he does not state, excluded this from his editions of “popular songs”.

\[ \text{Ας σ’ εφίλουν εις τα χείλη και ας μ’έλεγαν σταφύλι,} \\
\text{ας σ’ εφίλουν εις το μάτι και ας μ’έλεγαν Σταμάτη.}\textsuperscript{32}

17. I’m kneeling on the ground (Γονατιστός στέκω στη γη): two distiches.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{29} MS: Meteora, Metamorphoseos Monastery 34 [B [3]29], end fl yleaf (poem added: seventeenth-eighteenth century). The meaning of the word αρίζικος (or αρρίζικος) is “unlucky” or “wretched” (see Kazazis & Karanastasis, 2001:187).

\textsuperscript{30} MS: Meteora, Barlaam Monastery 183, f. 124v (poem added: seventeenth century). Edited by Veis, 1909:293.

\textsuperscript{31} MS: Meteora, Metamorphoseos Monastery 67 [B 19], f. 24v (distich added: sixteenth-seventeenth century).

\textsuperscript{32} The text in manuscript has: “ἀς εφήλουν εἰς στα χήλη καὶ ἀν μέλεγαν σταφίλη ἀς εφήλουν εἰς το μάτι κ(α)ὶ ἀς μελέγαν σταμάτη”.

The first distich possibly derives from an alphabet. The “speaker” is once again the male lover:

Γονατιστός στέκω στη γη, τα χέρια μου δεμένα,
την Παναγία παρακαλώ, κόρη μου, για τ’ εσένα.
Έχεις ελιά στο μάγουλο, δος μου να τη φιλήσω
και όρκο να κάμω στο χαρτί να μην το μολογήσω.

18. On Sunday you’re silver (Ασήμι είσαι την Κυριακή): two lines.³⁴ The male lover extols his lady’s physical beauty, using stereotypical metaphors found in this poetry as well as in folksongs:

Ασήμι ‘σαι την Κυριακή, μάλαμα τη Δευτέρα,
μαργαριτάρι ξέλαμπρο όλη την εβδομάδα.

19. Young girl, sweet little girl (Μωρή μικρή, μικρούτσικη), 2 lines.³⁵ This distich was included by Veis in the “Distiches of love” (see above no. 14).

20. I’m the basil and you’re the marjoram (Εγώ ’μαι το βασιλικό κι εσύ ’’σαι μακαράνα): two lines.³⁶ The distich is written next to a thirteen-line poem on the hour of death.

21. With your voice of a crane, and with your peacock’s beauty (Αγερανέ με τη φωνή, παγώνι με το κάλλος): three lines.³⁷

³⁴ MS: Meteora, Agiou Stephanou Monastery 30, f. 1v (distich probably added in the seventeenth century).
³⁵ MS: Meteora, Metamorphoseos Monastery 67 [B 19], f. 24v (distich added: sixteenth-seventeenth century); in the catalogue the distich appears as in the manuscript (see: Sophianos, 1986:89).
³⁶ MS: Athens, National Library of Greece 2105, back fly leaf (distich added: seventeenth century); see: L. Politis, 1991:145. The word makarana (μακαράνα) does not appear in Kriaras’ Lexikon; it is probably equivalent to ματζουράνα (marjoram).
22. I’m sending you, my love, an Easter egg (Αυγό σε στέλνω, μάτια μου, αυγό της Πασχαλίας): two lines.\(^{38}\)

23. I kissed your lips (Εφίλησα τα χείλη σου): 2 lines.\(^{39}\)

24. You remember when I kissed you (Θυμάσαι όταν σε φίλησα): two lines.\(^{40}\) The distich is written in a mocking manner; the male lover, boasting, wishes to remind the girl of his sexual “achievements” (cf. no. 13 above):

\[\text{Θυμάσαι ότα σ’ εφίλησα επάνωθεν στη σκάλα} \\
\text{και τσίμπησα τ’ άσπρο βυζί και φώναξ’ η δασκάλα;}\]

25. Your lips are a jujube, your mouth a quince (Τα χείλη σου ’ναι τζίντζυφο, το στόμα σου κυδώνι): one line.\(^{41}\) This is obviously not a complete poem. It is worth noting that both of the fruits used to describe the loved one’s lips and mouth have a bitter taste; maybe the lover was thinking of sweets made from these fruits.

26. How nice your body looked, the beautiful gem (Καλά σ’ εφάνη το κορμί, τ’ όμορφο το καμάρι): one line.\(^{42}\)

27. A talk, a great tale (Μιαν αθιλογή, παραβολή μεγάλη): five lines. I will conclude this category with this fragment of a poem which is

\(^{38}\) MS: Athens, National Library of Greece, 2420, f. 15r (distich added: sixteenth-seventeenth century); see: L. Politis, 1991:419.

\(^{39}\) MS: Elassona, Olymbiotissa Monastery 59, inside of the front cover (the manuscript is dated to the sixteenth century, but the distich is a later addition). Skouvaras, the catalogue compiler, presents it as it is found in the manuscript (1967:274). The edited text reads: Εφίλησα τ’ αχείλι σου, είναι γλυκό σα μέλι / μου ’φάνη ότι έφαγα σταφύλι απ’ τ’ αμπέλι.

\(^{40}\) MS: Elassona, Olymbiotissa Monastery 198, f. 13v (the manuscript is dated to the sixteenth or sixteenth century, but the distich is a later addition, see Skouvaras, 1967:378).


\(^{42}\) MS: Athens, National Library of Greece, 2053, written on the wooden board used in the binding (verse added: sixteenth-seventeenth century); see: L. Politis, 1991:98.
found in a fifteenth-century manuscript.\footnote{Vienna, Staatsbibliothek, Theologicus graecus 262, f. 416r.} This is also a later edition by a reader whose writing skills are very poor. However, this poem is perhaps the most important of its kind; it transmits a line from the romance of *Imberios and Margarona*. To be precise, line four corresponds to *Imberios* line 83 (τα χείλη του ήσαν κόκκινα, κιννάβαρι βαμμένα).\footnote{I would like to thank Alfred Vincent once again for bringing this to my attention.} The anonymous writer noted down all that he remembered, hence the poor metric quality in its first three lines:

\begin{quote}
μίαν αθιλογή, παραβολή μεγάλη
έχει την κυρά σεβαστή,
ωσάν έχει νούλα τα κάλλη
και χέι και χείλη κόκκινα, κιννάβαρι βαμμένα,
κι ήθελα να τα φίλησα, χείλη μου τα καμένα.
\end{quote}

3 νούλα: all (the n is apparently a redundant sound added by the singer to avoid hiatus) 4 κιννάβαρι: cinnabar (i.e. red mercuric sulphide; a poisonous substance used to colour the lips)

d. Love poetry within the love romances and other texts

As I have mentioned, I have included in the list of love poems the love letters and songs that are embedded in the romances of the *Achilleid, Livistros and Rodamni, Kallimachos and Chrysorroi, Alexander and Semiramis* and the epic *Digenis Akritis*.

28. *The Achilleid* contains six love-letter poems and five songs (one of which is Achilles’ lament for Polyxeni’s death).

29. *Livistros and Rodamni* contains 26 love-letter poems, seven songs and one poem (by Rodamni for Livistros). The following is from one of the songs by Livistros to the maiden Rodamni:

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Κοράσιον ηλιογέννητον 
στρατιώτης ασχολείται 
καὶ εἰς λιβάδιν εὖνοστὸν 
έναι κατουνεμένος.
Με τὸ φέγγος τὴν ἱσάζει 
καὶ νικά τὸν ἡ ὦραία: 
τὸ κάλλος τῆς τὸν ἐποικεν 
ξένον ἀπὸ τα ἐδικά τοῦ.
Καὶ ἐπαθὲν πολλὰς ὀδύνας 
ἐὼς νὰ ἱβρει τὴν ὦραιαν, 
ἡύρεν τὴν καὶ ἀκόμη πᾶσχει 
ὁ λαμπρός ὁ στρατιώτης.

2044–2055)

3 εὖνοστὸν: beautiful 
4 κατουνεμένος: encamped 
5 ἱσάζει: compares 
8 τα ἐδικά του: his home(land)


31. *Alexander and Semiramis* contains one love-letter and one song, which is sung by the queen’s maidens on the occasion of her marriage to Alexander. There is also another letter by Semiramis to Alexander, to which the above-mentioned letter is a response, but part of it is strongly connected to events of the story. Thus we have excluded it from our corpus, since it cannot stand independently. Suffice to say that its initial line (l. 1162) is a variation of the stereotypical Χαρτί σε πέμπω, αὐθέντη μου, ἰδέ, αὐγάνωσέ το, also found in Livistros, the Vienna collection and the Katalogia.

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46 The *Tale of Alexander and Semiramis* is transmitted in two variants (B and S), which appeared recently in an excellent critical edition by Ulrich Moenning (2004). I would like to thank Uli once again for making available to me his edition from his “Habilitationschift” and for sending it to me now in its final book form.


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32. *Digenis Akritis* contains two songs (ll. 401–404, 432–435 in the Grottaferrata version), as well as a three-line poem. It is worth mentioning that the hero accompanies himself on a musical instrument, which he apparently takes with him on his adventures. Its name varies; in the Grottaferrata version it is called “kithara” (κιθάρα), while in the Escorial manuscript it is a lute (λαβούτον).

**Observations**

From the list provided above we observe that six of the most important collections/works of medieval Greek love poetry (a.1, a.2, a.3, b.6, b.7, c.8) are found in manuscripts that contain one or more of the romances. Is this merely a coincidence? Or should we begin to consider whether the surviving manuscripts have much further information to offer us? In other words, a systematic study of them is essential, especially those with missing folios.

A striking feature for the reader of these works is that scholars’ treatment of early modern Greek love poetry is confused and confusing. Various terms are used interchangeably for the same work, and they are all of course arbitrary. Equally arbitrary were the titles given by the editors to literary works of this period in general. As a result, one finds the love lyric compositions defined as love or popular songs, oral or written, popular or love poems, or even love verses (στιχουργήματα), or “semi-demotic verses”. They are often grouped together with the love romances under the general term “love poetry”. In the chapter on “Love poetry” in his history of Byzantine vernacular

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47 Άγουρος όταν αγαπά κόρην ωραιότάτην, / όταν εκεί απέρχεται και βλέπει της τα κάλλη, / δαμάζεται η καρδίτσα του, ου θέλει ζην εις κόσμον (“When a boy loves a very beautiful girl, / when he comes there and sees her beauty, / his poor heart is tamed, he does not wish to live in the world.”). The text and the translation are by Elizabeth Jeffreys (1998, ll. 256–258).

48 See: Zoras, 1956:49. L. Politis in his anthology (1985:18–40) lists under the general title “Καταλόγια” (=songs) poems from the London, Vienna and Naples collections, and as headings for individual poems he includes: “Ἀλφαβητος της αγαπής”, “The one hundred words”, “Καταλόγια” and “Short songs” (“Λιανοτράγουδα”).

literature, Hans-Georg Beck includes the *Katalogia*, the *Rhyme of girl and boy*, the Vienna and Naples collections, *The abandoned woman of Chania*, but also a poem entitled *On an old man, that he should not marry a young girl* (Περί γέροντος να μην πάρει κορίτσι). The latter certainly does not belong to love poetry; it should be classed as a satirical/moralising poem. Panagiotis Mastrodimitris in his *Anthology* places only Falieros’ works and the *Rimada* under the heading “Love poems”; the *Katalogia* and the Cypriot love poems, for example, are found together with moralising and historical texts under the heading “Vernacular texts from Rhodes, the Heptanese, Cyprus and the Peloponnese” (Beck, 1993:286–7; Mastrodimitris, 31998).

The remains of medieval Greek love poetry are unquestionably meagre. This was pointed out decades ago by as eminent an authority as Georgios Zoras, in the “Introduction” to his *Byzantine poetry* volume: “Η καθαρώς λυρική ποίησις, και δη και η περί ερωτικά θέματα πραγματευομένη, και κατά τους τελευταίους βυζαντινούς αιώνες και κατά τους πρώτους μεταβυζαντινούς είναι περιορισμένη εις ποσότητα και μάλλον πενιχρά εις επιτεύγματα” (Zoras, 1956:47). This being the case, can we possibly talk about a popular medieval tradition of love poetry? If the quantity of surviving texts is used as the only indicator for measuring the development of a genre, we could argue that this is one of several branches of medieval Greek vernacular literature which do not have much to show for themselves. However, my answer is yes: the list of works that I have presented is by no means final. My experience from working on two projects on vernacular Greek literature tells me that there are still a number of vernacular texts of the late Byzantine and post-Byzantine periods hidden

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49 Also, as well as the *Katalogia* and the Naples collection, Zoras (1956:254–81) includes in his “Love poetry” section a lengthy narrative poem (376 lines): Iakovos Trivolis’ *The story of the king of Scotland and the queen of England* (Ιστορία του ρε της Σκοτίας και της ηγίσσας της Εγγλίτερας). Because this poem has many similarities to the seventh story from Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, it has been suggested that it is a free adaptation. Initially I considered including it in the list, but, apart from the fact that it is a narrative poem, its lyric features are very minimal.

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away in manuscripts, unknown to scholars, simply because libraries with large collections of manuscripts do not always have up-to-date and detailed catalogues. An example is the National Library in Paris. Furthermore, and most importantly, one could not possibly know the quantity of love poems once in existence, since a significant number of Greek manuscripts have been passed down to us with missing folios, or were copied from originals which were incomplete. We know for a fact, for example, that this is the case in two of the collections we have described (Zoras, 1955:5). In addition, as we have already mentioned, the folios containing the folk songs in the Athos codex are not part of the main body of the manuscript. They are sheets taken from another manuscript and used to reinforce the binding (Lambros, 1914–1915: 423–24).50 Also we know that a large number of manuscripts were lost or completely destroyed for various reasons at different historical periods (Siapkaras-Pitsillidès, 1980:86); for example, many private and public libraries perished by fire.51 The manuscripts that remain intact are mostly in monastery libraries or belong to western collections.

The popularity of some kinds of work in later folk tradition may be a fairly good indicator of how important this kind of poetry was among the medieval Greeks. For the “One hundred words” Hesseling and Pernot in their edition of Katalogia alone have recorded seventeen oral versions.52 There are also other poems, especially distiches, that reappear in folk poetry. For instance the following distich from the Katalogia collection’s second alphabet:

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50 Lambros also states that in one folio some letters and musical symbols were cut out.

51 We shall not discuss here the possible number of works which perished during the troubled periods up to 1669. It is enough to mention the fire of 1909 at Mt Athos, in which a large number of manuscripts were destroyed in the Xeropotamou monastery; the fires after the disastrous earthquakes in the Ionian islands in 1953; and the fire at Makarios’ presidential residence in Nicosia in 1974.

52 Other variants of “One hundred words” are recorded in: Gneftos (1909:144–47); N. Politis (1910:138–46); Kambouroglous (1969:302–304); Loukatos (1979–1981:19–21). In the CD Τά αα εκ των σων by the young Cretan musician Dimitris Sgourós there is a song “Εκατόλογα της αγάπης” (“One hundred words of love”), which consists
"Περιστεράκι να γενώ να έλθω οπού κοιμάσαι,
σφικτά να σε περιπλακώ, πάντα να με θυμάσαι."

appears in variants in Cretan mantinades, e.g.:

"Σκνίπα θα γίνω και θα ’ρθω στην κάμαρα που μένεις,
να σε τσιμπώ, να τρώγεσαι, ύπνο να μη χορταίσεις."\(^{53}\)

Certainly, love songs were a popular form of entertainment for all classes.\(^{54}\) The romances, *Digenis* and later *Erotokritos* all indicate this. Let us not forget, for instance, Erotokritos’ night serenades under Aretousa’s windows, and the enjoyment which these gave to all the residents of the royal house. Furthermore, we are told that Aretousa writes these songs down and then memorises them. This was perhaps a common practice for the transmission of oral (and written) poetry. Martinus Crusius in his *Turcograecia* mentions that once when he was discussing the text of *Apollonios* with Stamatis Donatos, one of his Greek friends, Donatos told him that in the islands men would compete to see who could recite the most verses of such poems. This type of “games” were also carried out by young men and women, reciting love poems at home (Crusius, 1584:209). In addition, Cyprus’ cultural interchange with Italy can be seen from the fact that a poem from the Cypriot collection was apparently set to music by the Italian composer La Martoretta.\(^{55}\) I believe that a more systematic comparison between these works and the later folk tradition of love poetry is needed.

This leads to the question whether the medieval Greek love poetry was orally transmitted? I do not believe that this poetry is any different

\(^{53}\) See: Dermitzakis, 1963:94.

\(^{54}\) H.-G. Beck states that love songs were in particular popular with the lower classes (1999:287).

from the rest of medieval Greek poetry. Obviously there are works (i.e. songs) that surely are orally transmitted, but there are also works, such as some in the Katalogia collection, or the Cypriot love poems, that are written compositions by learned individuals. Why then did the poets not reveal their identity? Because, apart from Falieros’ Dream of Love, all of these poems are anonymous. Regarding the Cypriot collection, according to Siapkaras-Pitsillidès, during the Renaissance and the sixteenth century it was a common practice for poets to conceal their name in the text, using some form of word-play (Siapkaras-Pitsillidès, 1980:86). This may be true for a few of the compositions, but not for all or most. It may be relevant that some of the texts are relatively daring even by our standards, for instance the ending of the “One hundred words” from the Katalogia collection, or the distich (no. c.19):

Μωρή μικρή, μικρούτσικη που πλένεις στην πλακίτσα
να σε είχα να σε αγκάλιαζα να φώναζες “μανίτσα”.

The recurrence of themes and motifs demonstrates that these works as a whole have a common social and cultural background, in which Greek tradition and western influences can both be discerned. The issue of influences in early modern Greek love poetry is of course another interesting feature of the scholarly debate. Although some Greek scholars from the beginning of the twentieth century (e.g. Nikolaos Politis) tried to deny the western influence, many of the works we have discussed appear to have been composed in areas under western rule (such as the Aegean islands, Crete and Cyprus). Arnold van Gemert has argued convincingly that the theme of the dialogue at the window in the Rhyme of girl and boy is connected to an Italian Contrasto by Cielo d’Alcamo (1240) (van Gemert, 1980:36, 39–42). Also, the dialogue between the young man and the lady in two alphabets in the Katalogia relates to a type of western medieval love lyric, the tensos.

After the sixteenth century there is a shift in the presentation of love poetry. We now find an ideology that could almost be described as puritan, e.g. in Erotokritos. The idea of Eros as a judge, as he appears, for example, in the Katalogia, or as a superior authority who orders
the young girl to make love to the poet in Falieros’ *Love Dream* (ll. 81–3), the presentation of the female lover as an “Empress of Passion” (Ποθοκρατόρισσα) again in the *Katalogia*, cease to appear after the sixteenth century. On the contrary, Aretousa in *Erotokritos* does not even allow her lover to touch her hand. The young girl in the pastoral poem *The Shepherdess* is the only woman in this later poetry who has a full sexual relationship with her lover. Is it because she is supposedly naive and uncultured? Or is it because of the Venetian censorship — hence no doubt its moralising epilogue? The seventeenth-century Cretan theologian and scholar Frangiskos Skoufos condemns people reading books whose content is love.56 In the sixteenth century Pachomios Rousanos complains in general about the vernacular literary production that came out of the Venetian printing houses. He specifically describes love poetry as “satanical”.57 There clearly is a change. However, the issue is quite complicated. In the Cretan theatre, not all women are as adamant as Aretousa (e.g. in the comedies *Fortounatos* by Markantonios Foskolos and, even more, in *Katzourbos* by Georgios Chortatsis). Also, since we are talking about western-influenced lands, could the Counter-Reformation be relevant?

All the issues discussed in this paper have formed part of my research in and around medieval love poetry over the past three years. However, one thing is clear: there is a need for a study of the material with a systematic categorisation as well as an analysis of the different forms and styles of these love poems, based on criteria that are not ideologically, nationally and/or emotionally driven.

56 See, for example, in Manoussacas 1998, Skouphos’ letters nos. 9 and 29.
57 “Τις δ’ αν αριθμήσει τους απωλείας Απολλωνίους και υπερηφάνους Υπερίους και Χάροντας αχαρείς και ταρταρίους και Ερωτικά σατανικά, δι’ ων εις βόθυνον κατάγονται οι τούτοις χρώμενοι συν τοις αναδείξασιν;” (Lambros, 1905:347).
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