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MARCIN CYRULSKI, *Teodora Prodromosa Przygody Radante i Dosyklesa* [The Adventures of Rhodanthe and Dosikles by Theodore Prodromos], Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice 2020 [= Bibliotheca Byzantina], pp. 199

Byzantine romance was born in the 12th century¹, among the literati functioning thanks to the patronage of the Komnenian family², and was modeled on ancient Greek romance. Four works were written at that time, probably between the mid-1130s and the mid-1150s. Three have survived in their entirety, one in extensive fragments. They are *Rhodanthe and Dosikles* by Theodore Prodromos, *Drosilla and Charikles* by Niketas Eugenianos³, *The Story of Hysmine and Hysminias* by Eustathios Makrembolites, and the partially

preserved *Aristandros and Kallithea* by Constantine Manasses. All of them were written in verse, in elaborate Greek, according to a specific plot scheme: *two young people fall in love at first sight, then are separated, and after many dangers, amorous sufferings, attempts at fidelity and escapes, a happy reunion of the lovers takes place*⁴. It should be noted that Byzantine romance of the 12th century was a short-lived literary phenomenon, born and ended for reasons that are not entirely clear.

The book presented here is a Polish translation of the first of the aforementioned romances, *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, probably written in the second half of the 1130s. Its author was Theodore Prodromos. He was born around 1100 and died after 1156 but before 1170. For years, he was under the patronage of the Komnenian family: Irene Doukaina, Anna Komnena, Nicephorus Bryennius, and finally, Emperors John and Manuel Komnenos. He was a versatile artist. Apart from the romance of *Rhodanthe and Dosikles*, his output includes a number of occasional texts, dialogues, satirical, didactic, and philosophical texts⁵.

Marcin Cyrulski⁶, a classical philologist and historian from Łódź, undertook an undoubtedly difficult task which was to make the

¹ On the subject of the Byzantine romance of the Komnenian era, see, e.g. H. HUNGER, *Antiker und byzantinischer Roman [separatum]*, Heidelberg 1980; S. MACALISTER, *Aristotle on the Dream: a Twelfth-Century Romance Revival*, B 60, 1990, p. 195–212; IDEM, *Byzantine Twelfth-Century Romances: a Relative Chronology*, BMGS 15, 1991, p. 175–210; R. BEATON, *The Medieval Greek Romance*, Oxford 1989 (2nd ed. London 1996); J.B. BURTON, *Reviving the Pagan Greek Novel in a Christian World*, GRBS 39, 1998, p. 179–216; F. CONCA, *Il romanzo bizantino del XII secolo*, Torino 1994.

² On the literary circle in Constantinople in the 12th century and the patronage of the Komnenian family, see, e.g. H. HUNGER, *Die byzantinische Literatur der Komnenenzeit. Versuch einer Neubewertung*, AAW 105, 1968, p. 59–76; E. JEFFREYS, *The Sebastokratorissa Irene as Patron*, WJK 60.1, 2012, p. 177–194; EADEM, *The Komnenian Background to the Romans d'Antiquité*, B 48, 1980, p. 455–486; G.T. DENNIS, *Court Intellectuals and Rhetoric*, [in:] *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. H. MAGUIRE, Washington 1997, p. 131–140.

³ The work of Niketas has also been translated into Polish: NIKETAS EUGENIANOS, *Drosilla i Charikles*, ed., trans. K. GARA, Kraków 2013.

⁴ K. GARA, *Wprowadzenie*, [in:] NIKETAS EUGENIANOS, *Drosilla...*, p. 8.

⁵ On the life and work of Theodore Prodromos, the primary work remains W. HÖRANDER, *Theodoros Prodromos. Historische Gedichte*, Wien 1974 [= WBS, 1].

⁶ Marcin Cyrulski is also the author of the translation *Kronika trapezuncka – MICHAŁ PANARETOS, Kronika trapezuncka*, trans., comm. M. CYRULSKI, Łódź 2020 [= SeCer, 6].

romance of Theodore Prodromos available to the contemporary Polish reader. The translation is preceded by a short but strong and multifaceted introduction, which prepares readers, even those unfamiliar with Byzantine literature, for the reception of the text. It includes information on the preserved manuscripts of Rhodanthe and Dosikles, editions and translations into modern languages (p. 7–10), and the author of the work and his oeuvre (p. 19–20). We also find there reflections on how to determine the literary genre the text represents (p. 11–12), information about ancient romance (p. 13–14) and its readership in Byzantium (p. 15–18), as well as the chronology of the creation of the four romances of the Komnenian era (p. 21–24). The introduction further outlines the Byzantine realities in the ancient staffage of romances (p. 27–28), and finally, the principles applied in translation and the difficulties the translator had to face (p. 29–31). In preparing the introduction and commentaries, which facilitate the understanding of the text, M. Cyrulski has made use of representative literature on the subject (bibliography, p. 195–199). It may have been worthwhile to reach out to a few more works, e.g., A.Д. АЛЕКСИДЗЕ, *Византийский роман XII века*, Тбилиси 1965; С.В. ПОЛЯКОВА, *Из истории византийского романа*, Москва 1979; F. CONCA, *Osservazioni al testo del romanzo di Teodoro Prodromo*, [in:] *Storia, poesie, pensiero nel mondo antico. Studi in onore di Marcello Gigante*, Napoli 1994, p. 137–147; E. JEFFREYS, *Literatura w dwunastowiecznym Konstantynopolu – zmiana kierunków?*, PNH 8.2, 2009, p. 5–22; A. КОТЛОВСКА, *Miejsce portu w fabule XII-wiecznego romansu bizantyńskiego*, [in:] *Miasto na skrzyżowaniu mórz i kontynentów. Wczesno- i średniobizantyński Konstantynopol jako miasto portowe*, ed. M.J. LESZKA, K. MARINOW, Łódź 2016 [= BL, 23], p. 103–112.

The translation itself (p. 33–194) is a good testimony to the translation skills of Marcin Cyrulski, who seems to have managed to render not only the sense, but also the literary values of the Byzantine work. It was not an easy task, bearing in mind that the author of *The Adventures of Rhodanthe and Dosikles* had ambitions to demonstrate his erudition and writing skills.

The translation of *The Adventures of Rhodanthe and Dosikles* by Theodore Prodromos, done by Marcin Cyrulski and published by Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, will undoubtedly enrich the limited list of Byzantine belles-lettres translated into Polish, offering Polish readers a chance to learn about an interesting testimony of Byzantine literary achievements in the 12th century.

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