

# Etiology in Parthenius of Nicaea<sup>\*1</sup>

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## 1. Introduction

Parthenius of Nicaea, a Greek author of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE who remained unknown for a long time, has been the subject of a recent interest from specialists of Greek literature<sup>2</sup>. Modern research has demonstrated that the only conserved work of this freedman, the Ἐρωτικὰ Παθήματα, “Sufferings in love”<sup>3</sup>, was not a simple mythographic summary of short texts but a rich and complex “note-book” as defined by Jane Lightfoot<sup>4</sup>.

The Ἐρωτικὰ Παθήματα collects thirty-six brief love-stories featuring a devastating passion and are dedicated to the famous Latin poet Cornelius Gallus as a literary base for future poetic creations (*EP, Preface*). Although Parthenius himself describes his stories “in as brief a form as possible”, the latest large study

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<sup>2</sup> As examples: Parthenios, *Sufrimientos de amor y fragmentos*, E. CALDERÓN DORDA (ed.), Madrid, CSIC, 1988; Parthenius of Nicaea, *Erotika Pathemata = The Love Stories of Parthenius*, J. STERN (ed.), New York, Garland, 1992; Parthenius of Nicaea, *The Poetical Fragments and the Erotika Pathemata*, J. L. LIGHTFOOT (ed.), Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1999; C. A. FRANCESE, *Parthenius of Nicaea and Roman Poetry*, Bern, Frankfurt and Main, 2001; Parthénios de Nicée, *Passions d’amour*, M. BIRAUD – D. VOISIN – A. ZUCKER (edd.), Grenoble, Jérôme Millon, 2008; A. ZUCKER (ed.), *Littérature et érotisme dans les Passions d’amour de Parthénios de Nicée*, Grenoble, Jérôme Millon, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Attested by only one manuscript: *Codex Palatinus Heidelbergensis Graecus 398 (P)*.

<sup>4</sup> J. L. LIGHTFOOT, op. cit., pp. 217-222.

shows that this collection is a well-structured whole<sup>5</sup>. Many aspects of this work, necessary to its understanding, such as its sources, erudition, literary technique, etc., are analyzed in the studies quoted above but these scholars have not yet sufficiently taken into account another important one. It is the “etiological dimension” of the stories told by Parthenius.

No less than twelve of the anecdotes end with an “etiological conclusion”, the second most frequent literary pattern used in the book after “travel” (exemplified in eighteen notes). Therefore, it seems relevant to be interested in studying this aspect to improve our knowledge of this particular group of texts and, more generally, of the use of etiology as a creative process. After specifying what we define as “etiology”, two main lines of investigation have to be explored to fully approach the question of etiology in Parthenius. On the one hand, one should attempt to answer the following questions: how does Parthenius introduce etiology in his stories? What are the narratological techniques used to signal to the reader that the story tries to explain something? This first part aims to examine how etiology is constructed in a collection such as Parthenius’, and what are the consequences for the structure of the whole.

On the other hand, we will interpret some of the functions of etiology in the Ἐρωτικά Παθήματα and we will attempt to understand why Parthenius gives this dimension to the notes and what it brings to the richness and to the quality of the overall work.

## 2. The concept of “etiology”

First of all, it is important to determine what we call “etiology”. To be precise and to avoid confusion, we in fact refer to “narrative etiology” as defined by Loreto Núñez: “des mythes présentés sous la forme d’un récit qui explique un phénomène naturel ou une coutume sociale et culturelle, le rattachant à un événement passé qui en est la cause et le fondement”<sup>6</sup>. In other words, the fact explained by the story could come from a large range of *realia* (political, social, familial, religious, legal institutions; all type of monuments; designations...) or *curiosa*<sup>7</sup> (cultural habits; linguistic particularities...) of a civilization. Furthermore, some scholars think that in the classical world at the time of Ovid Greek and Latin writers would know that the causes detailed in their texts were unreliable and created for the people<sup>8</sup>. However, ancient authors by-and-large used “narrative etiology”

<sup>5</sup> A. ZUCKER, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> L. NÚÑEZ, “Mythes enchâssés dans un roman grec: Achille Tatius entre érudition et divertissement”, *Pallas*, 78, 2008, 321.

<sup>7</sup> J. POU CET, “Les préoccupations étiologiques dans la tradition ‘historique’ sur les origines et les rois de Rome”, *Latomus*, 51, 1992, 281.

<sup>8</sup> D. PORTE, *L’étiologie religieuse dans les Fastes d’Ovide*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1985, p. 35.

especially in poetry and historiography<sup>9</sup> because of their taste for rare mythical or historical anecdotes and the very strong links between the past and present established by etiological material<sup>10</sup>. Moreover, etiology could be considered as having reached “the status of a literary genre”<sup>11</sup> with Callimachus’ *Aitia*.

### 3. Constructions of etiology

Also known for his lost collection in verse, the *Metamorphoseis*, which was assuredly etiological, Parthenius of Nicaea also introduced this dimension to his work in prose, the Ἑρωτικά Παθήματα. We can count twelve etiological stories<sup>12</sup> spread equally throughout the work<sup>13</sup>. A same summary can present different versions of the same etiological story (e.g. EP 11) and it also can explain several elements linked together (e.g. EP 32). When we first read them, the subjects of the notes seems to be varied and without any apparent logical order but when we analyze more deeply the texts, we notice that Parthenius explained three different types of phenomena: natural (EP 13, 15), related to local history (EP 5, 7, 11, 18, 23, 26, 30, 32, 36) and psychological (EP 17). The first category describes the origin of a natural element by the protagonist’s metamorphosis: the chalcis-bird<sup>14</sup> and the laurel. The second one can be divided in four groups: cities’ foundation (EP 5, 11, 32), local particularities (EP 7, 26, 36), reasons for war (EP 18, 23), and the name of a people (EP 30). Finally, the third category is constituted by only one story, EP 17 *Periander’s mother* (Appendix 1). In fact, this vignette is slightly different because it does not relate the origin of a concrete element but rather an immaterial one. It enlightens the reason for the madness and the cruelty of a Greek tyrant, Periander. Note also that any summary is constructed on the frequent framework of the *primi* or the πρώτοι εὑρεταί (also called heurematology)<sup>15</sup>.

Now that the different subjects of the etiological notes have been briefly presented, we can examine how Parthenius constructs these particular stories in his

<sup>9</sup> M. CHASSIGNET, “Étiologie, étymologie et éponymie chez Cassius Hemina : mécanismes et fonction”, *LEC*, 66, 1998, p. 322.

<sup>10</sup> For a detailed overview of the reasons of the development of etiology at the time of Callimachus, see: K. S. MYERS, *Ovid’s Causes: Cosmogony and Aetiology in the Metamorphoses*, Ann Arbor, The University of Michigan Press, 1994, pp. 16-21.

<sup>11</sup> J. F. MILLER, *Roman Elegiac “Aitia”: Propertius IV and Ovid’s “Fasti” in Light of the Poetry of Callimachus*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina, 1978, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> On this point, we disagree with D. Voisin who found ten etiological stories (in D. VOISIN, “Dispositio et stratégies littéraires dans les *Erotica Pathémata*”, in A. ZUCKER, op. cit., p. 65).

<sup>13</sup> EP 5, *Leucippus*; EP 7, *Hipparinus*; EP 11, *Byblis*; EP 13, *Harpalyce*; EP 15, *Daphne*; EP 17, *Periander’s mother*; EP 18, *Neaera*; EP 23, *Chilonis*; EP 26, *Apriate*; EP 30, *Celtine*; EP 32, *Anthippe* and EP 36, *Arganthoné*.

<sup>14</sup> The heroine does not give her name to the bird but some of her characteristics: brother/sister killing and incest.

<sup>15</sup> J. POU CET, loc. cit., 281-282.

collection. Most of time, it appears that he uses textual markers to show the reader that the story has an explicative dimension. If the note explains the name of an element (geographical name, people's name, animal name...), we always find a naming verb<sup>16</sup> as καλέω, "call", ἐπικαλέω, "call by surname", or προσαγορεύω, "call by name", (e.g. *EP* 11, *EP* 15) sometime in association with another word which makes explicit the etiological nature. The temporal adverb νῦν, "now", links the mythical past of the narrative to the present in two notes (*EP* 26, 4: τοῦτο ἔτι νῦν ἠρῶον Τραμβήλου καλεῖται; *EP* 36, 4: ἐπὶ ποταμῶ τῶ νῦν ἀπ' ἐκείνου Ῥήσω καλουμένῳ<sup>17</sup>). In the text, we also encounter the causal conjunction διό, "wherefore", (*EP* 32, 4: διὸ καὶ τὴν γῆν Ἠπειρον ἀπὸ ταύτης ὀνομασθῆναι<sup>18</sup>) indicating that the following sentence is an explicative one. Then, in *EP* 30, ἀπό + genitive, "from", tells very precisely where the people's name is from (*EP* 30, 2: Κελτόν, ἀφ' οὗ δὴ Κελτοὶ προσηγορεύθησαν<sup>19</sup>). Finally, ἡ αἰτία, "cause", appears in the fifth *EP* (δι' ἣν αἰτίαν) because Parthenius wanted to structure the tale in two main parts – the incestuous love and its consequences – and to make clear that everything related before is the direct cause of the conclusions of the story. For etiology which does not explain the origin of a name, ἡ αἰτία is also found in *EP* 17 (the cruelty of Periander) and *EP* 23 (the war between Sparta and Epirus); διό is again found in *EP* 7 (concerning two statues and a local law).

In general, the etiological markers are situated at the end of the narrative or at the end of one of the different versions reported by Parthenius. For example, in the note devoted to Byblis (*EP* 11), he introduces the etiological dimension – the origin of the city name *Lycos* – at the end of the second version, and another one – the cause of the naming of the spring *Byblis* – in the closing sentence of the fourth and last variant of the story:

Φασὶ δέ τινες καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν δακρῶν κρήνην ῥυῆναι αἰδίον τὴν καλουμένην Βυβλίδα. (PARTH., *EP* 11, 4)

Some also say that an everlasting stream flowed from her tears, and that the stream's name was Byblis.

In many cases, etiology may be perceived as a conclusion to the tale with a transfer, thanks to the markers, from a distant past often mythological or heroic to the concrete present of the reader (a name, a law, a tomb...).

<sup>16</sup> These naming *formulae* are clearly described by A. MICHALOPOULOS in his introduction *Ancient Etymologies in Ovid's Metamorphoses: a Commented Lexicon*, Leeds, Francis Cairns, 2001, pp. 1-12.

<sup>17</sup> Texts and translations here come from J. L. LIGHTFOOT, *op. cit.* *EP* 26, 4: "Even to this day it is called Trambelus' Shrine". *EP* 36, 4: "on the banks of the river now called Rhesus after him".

<sup>18</sup> *EP* 32, 4: "and that the country is for that reason called Epirus after her".

<sup>19</sup> *EP* 30, 2: "Celtus, from whom the Celts take their name".

There is only one story where the causal sign introduces the summary; it is *EP 17* in which αἰτία figures in the first paragraph:

Λέγεται δὲ καὶ Περιάνδρον τὸν Κορίνθιον τὴν μὲν ἀρχὴν ἐπιεικῆ τε καὶ πρᾶον εἶναι ὕστερον δὲ φονικώτερον γενέσθαι δι' αἰτίαν τήνδε. (PARTH., *EP 17*, 1)

It is also said that Periander of Corinth was, initially, reasonable and mild of disposition, but that he later became more bloodthirsty for the following reason.

The entire note is presented as the development of this αἰτία with the terrible consequences detailed in the closing part. Two elements could be proposed to understand this exception: on the one hand, this story is very different from the others since it is the only one to tell a psychological etiology with a real historical aspect but without any concrete impact on the present. Maybe Parthenius would like to make clear at the very beginning of the Ἐρωτικόν that he will explain something different from the tales written before and, in a way, to warn his readership. On the other hand, the author is very interested in the development of incestuous passion in the heart of the characters and he describes very precisely each step in the feelings developing between the mother and her son before the climax and the conclusions<sup>20</sup>. Then, the presence of ἡ αἰτία as a starting point of the note could directly participate in structuring of a reliable and convincing narrative.

We also find two *EP* where there is no marker in the text: these are *EP 13* and *EP 18*. In the first one, it is even difficult to determine what is explained here; Parthenius does not point to any particular fact or event. Scholars mention the “implicit etiology” of the bronze shield won during the Argive Heraia<sup>21</sup> but elements in the text are not clearly apparent and their interpretation remains complicated. It is the reason why we will put aside this story of our study for the moment. By contrast, the case of *EP 18* seems different because, even if there is no lexical marker in the Greek text, we can detect a causal circumstance in the participle<sup>22</sup> which explains the reason of the war at the end of the story (*EP 18*, 4): δόξας δὲ ὁ Ὑψικρέων ἀσεβεῖσθαι πείθει Μιλησίους πολεμεῖν τοῖς Ναξίοις, “because he [Hypsikreon] thought this treatment outrageous, he persuaded the Milesians to declare war on the Naxians”. This explicative sense of the participle is absent from the English, German and French translations<sup>23</sup> though it seems very important for understanding correctly the text.

<sup>20</sup> The different steps are deeply identified and analyzed in M. BIRAUD – D. VOISIN – A. ZUCKER, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

<sup>21</sup> J. L. LIGHTFOOT, *op. cit.*, pp. 449-450; M. BIRAUD – D. VOISIN – A. ZUCKER, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

<sup>22</sup> On the causal circumstance of participle: W. W. GOODWIN, *Syntax of the Moods and Tenses of the Greek Verb*, London, Macmillan and Co, 1889, pp. 334-335; J. HUMBERT, *Syntaxe grecque*, Paris, Klincksieck, 1954, p. 130.

<sup>23</sup> J. L. LIGHTFOOT, *op. cit.*, p. 345 ; K. BRODERSEN, *Liebesleiden in der Antike: Die 'Erotika Pathemata' des Parthenios*, Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2000, p. 81; M. BIRAUD – D. VOISIN – A. ZUCKER, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

It is now interesting to notice that, since initially told by an anonymous entity, Parthenius distances himself from the stories he reports. There is one exception in *EP* 11 where the author gives the name of Nicaenetus before quoting his own version in verses:

Περὶ δὲ Καῦνου καὶ Βυβλίδος, τῶν Μιλήτου παίδων, διαφόρως ἱστορεῖται. Νικαίνετος μὲν γὰρ φησι τὸν Καῦνον ἐρασθέντα τῆς ἀδελφῆς [...] λέγει δὲ ἔπεισι τοῖσδε· (PARTH., *EP* 11, 1-2)

Various stories are told about Caunus and Byblis, the children of Miletus. Nicaenetus says that Caunus fell in love with his sister [...] He says in the following hexameters:

Elsewhere, he uses λέγεται or φασί<sup>24</sup> to indicate to the reader that he is just transcribing a tale (*EP* 15, 17, 30 and 36) – or a part of the tale (*EP* 5, 11, 26 and 32) – heard or read before. Only three stories do not have this mention: *EP* 7, 18 and 23, even if it is obvious that they are not Parthenius' creations<sup>25</sup>. In fact, there are also the only ones to be inscribed in a deep historical context since they explain the reasons for a war between two cities or the origins of cities' particularities. For these three particular stories, Parthenius does not refer to another previous source and this gives credence to the historical narrative because there is no link with an unfixed past. We clearly see that the author does not deal in the same way with historical events and with facts which belong to a legendary collection largely used by the poets.

In addition to the textual markers and the distance introduced by Parthenius in the etiological stories, a recurrent structure appears throughout these texts: all of them are constructed in a four steps-stages<sup>26</sup>: first, somebody falls in an impossible love; second, he/she tries to satisfy his/her passion; next, their love arrives at an impasse; finally, the consequences leave a trace physical or not on history<sup>27</sup>. In this fourth step, it is even possible to specify that this mark is caused by one of the two lovers involved in the missed relationship. Only one exception is noted, *EP* 32, where it is the accidental murderer, the prince Cichyrus, who gives his name to the city founded and not the girl killed as in the other stories of murder. Indeed, in *EP* 26, it is Trambelus who leaves the trace for future with his tomb and not his killer, Achilles; in *EP* 36, the river takes the name of Rhesus killed by Diomedes. Perhaps in *EP* 32, Parthenius wanted to insist on the innocence of the

<sup>24</sup> We also find this distance expressed by this kind of verbs in stories with no etiological aspect.

<sup>25</sup> For the previous versions of the stories: J. L. LIGHTFOOT, *op. cit.*, pp. 407-408, 489, 507.

<sup>26</sup> On the permanent structure in the fairy-tale: V. PROPP, *Morphology of the Folktale*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1968, pp. 19-24.

<sup>27</sup> In *EP* 17, even if the mark of the impossible love is introduced at the beginning of the story (Periander cruelty), it remains the fourth step of the development as the result of the impossible love on the character.

young prince who causes this hunting accident with no previous responsibility in the forbidden love between Anthippe and her lover and also on his nobility indicated by the madness immediately provoked by the fatal mistake and by people desire to dedicate to him the city.

Of course, the writer exploits all the combinations and variants possible<sup>28</sup> and he can add some peripheral elements so that the action is never exactly the same. The impossibility of love could be caused by many reasons: love is not mutual (*EP* 15); the lover is already married (*EP* 18); it is an incestuous love (*EP* 11); a father disagrees (*EP* 32); a war happens (*EP* 36)... The ways the heroes try to get through it also vary from a story to the other: rape (*EP* 26), adultery (*EP* 23), ruse (*EP* 17), persuasion (*EP* 36)... Finally, the destiny descends upon them in different forms. If the love was not mutual, the loved one tries to escape this situation through suicide (*EP* 26), metamorphosis (*EP* 15) or murder (*EP* 17). If the love was shared but however impossible, one of the lovers or both are killed by accident (*EP* 5) or jealousy (*EP* 7), in a fight (*EP* 32) or at war (*EP* 36). The mark could be a hero's name for a tree, a town or a people (*EP* 30), a tomb of the protagonist (*EP* 26), a law to remember the bravery of the lovers, a war (*EP* 18)...

Two examples will clearly illustrate this basic structure, which is each time enriched by other literary elements: in *EP* 5, Leucippus falls in love with his sister but she has already been promised in marriage to someone else by her father (this is the first step). In this story, the impossibility is twofold and Parthenius combines the *topos* of "incestuous love" with that of "disagreement with the father". Then, the heroes try to live together for a while thanks to their mother's help (the second step). But someone reveals their secret to their father, Xanthios, and, in a fight during the night, the girl and her father are killed accidentally (the third step). For this reason, Leucippus leaves his country to colonize a territory, called now Cretinaeum, after a short stay in Crete (the fourth step).

In *EP* 15, Parthenius constructs the story by repeating the etiological development after a two complementary structures, one in three steps and one in four: Leucippus falls in love with Daphne but she is not interested by men (the first step of the first structure). The hero tries to become his friend and to seduce her by disguising himself as a woman (the second step). Nevertheless, Apollo, jealous of Leucippus, falls in love for Daphne and reveals Leucippus' deception; but she does not like him more than Leucippus (the third step of the first structure but the first one of the second). To satisfy his passion, the god tries to rape her (the second step) but to escape to him, Daphne implores Zeus to disappear and she is transformed into tree (the third step). This tree, the *laurel*, is thereafter called by her name (the fourth step). Even if the stories are elaborated along a same basic outline, we can see how Parthenius employs originality and creativity to tell in a new way some stories of the old legendary collection.

<sup>28</sup> The Parthenius' *variatio* is studied in detail by D. VOISIN, op. cit., pp. 40-46.

Only one story associates the element usually explained by the tragic consequences in the fourth step with the second one. In fact, because of this, the tale seems to end positively. This is *EP 30* where Heracles, during his return from Erytheia, is driven to sleep with Celtine:

τὸν δὲ Ἡρακλέα τὸ μὲν τι καὶ τὰς βοῦς ἐπειγόμενον ἀνασώσασθαι, πολὺ μᾶλλον μέντοι τὸ κάλλος ἐκπλαγέντα τῆς κόρης συγγενέσθαι αὐτῇ· καὶ αὐτοῖς χρόνου περιήκοντος γενέσθαι παῖδα Κελτόν, ἀφ' οὗ δὴ Κελτοὶ προσηγορεύθησαν. (PARTH., *EP 30*, 2)

Heracles was in a hurry to get his cattle back, but he was even more struck by the girls' beauty, and so he did have intercourse with her. When the time came round, a child was born to them, Celtus, from whom the Celts take their name.

Even if the story ends in a happy moment, the readers know what will happen after this episode: the hero will leave Bretannus' court and abandon Celtine; the tale could not have a happy ending. Indeed, there were many different stories<sup>29</sup> about the adventures of Heracles during his return in Greece but readers knew well the general framework of this legend: they realized that after each labor, the hero will come back home. Moreover, Parthenius gives some clues to an implied negative ending in the first notes of the collection which contain similar episodes from Odysseus' life. There, in *EP 2*, we see Polymela devastated by the departure of Odysseus:

ἡ κόρη φωρᾶται τινα τῶν Τρωϊκῶν λαφύρων ἔχουσα καὶ τούτοις μετὰ πολλῶν δακρύων ἀλινδουμένη. (PARTH., *EP 2*, 2)

The girl was discovered clinging to some of the spoils from Troy, and rolling about on them in floods of tears.

The author also relates the love affair between Odysseus and Euipe during a journey to Epirus (*EP 4*), which ultimately drove the hero to kill his own son born to this relationship. In this way, even if the end of *EP 30* is not told by Parthenius, he gives all the necessary elements to guess what will happen to the characters in a mythological context known by the readers. Finally, the fact that the etiology does not issue from a negative event as in all the other stories could be interpreted as a bad omen for the future of the characters.

The problem with this structure is that it is not only used in the etiological notes. We find this three-part structure (impossible love – attempt to satisfy it – failure with its consequences) in other stories of the collection (e.g. *EP 2* and 4).

<sup>29</sup> For a summary of the variants of the stories about Heracles after the cattle of Geryon episode: P. GRIMAL, *Dictionnaire de la mythologie grecque et romaine*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 1951, s.v. "Héraclès", pp. 193-194.



In the case of *EP* 4, Oenone and Paris knew that their love for each other was an impasse but nonetheless persevered in it:

χρόνον μέντοι τινά γενήσεσθαι ἐν ᾧ ἀπαλλάξας αὐτῆν εἰς τὴν Εὐρώπην  
περαιωθήσεται, κακεῖ πτοηθεὶς ἐπὶ γυναικὶ ξένην πόλεμον ἐπάξεται τοῖς  
οἰκείοις. (PARTH., *EP* 4, 3)

But that there would come a time when he would abandon her and cross over to Europe, and there, infatuated with a foreign woman, would bring war upon his own people.

Therefore, if the only element which clearly differentiates etiological stories from the others is the markers detailed before, we can now rightly ask why Parthenius gives this dimension to so many stories and what it contributes to the Ἐρωτικὰ Παθήματα and its purposes.

#### 4. Functions of etiology in Parthenius

Firstly, we can suppose that the author from Nicaea followed the literary fashion of his time as described by S. Myers: “After Callimachus, who included *aetia* not only in his famous poem of that name, but in almost all of his work, etiology became an essential part of the learned poet’s treatment of his mythical material from Apollonius Rhodius through Vergil’s *Aeneid*, and was associated with Callimachus’ poetic ideals and the influence of Hesiod”<sup>30</sup>. But this hypothesis is a little too simple and insufficient to really understand the process developed in the Ἐρωτικὰ Παθήματα. It is also likely that Parthenius wanted to echo Cornelius Gallus’ erudite tastes by making reference to one of his models<sup>31</sup>, Callimachus. Nevertheless, restricting oneself to these two suppositions corresponds to thinking that the note-book is just a collection of summaries without original literary creation. Yet it has been demonstrated that the work was more complex than that<sup>32</sup>.

Secondly, when we examine the role of etiology in the book itself, it is obvious that its many aspects participate – with other techniques such as geography, genres, chronology... – to the style of *uariatio*, which was very important in Parthenius’ creative process, as shown by Dominique Voisin<sup>33</sup> and by our study of the stories’ structures above. But, in spite of its diversity, the etiology, presents

<sup>30</sup> S. MYERS, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>31</sup> Euphorion was the main model of Cornelius Gallus but it is probable that Callimachus also inspired the Latin poet. Cf. J.-P. BOUCHER, *Caius Cornélius Gallus*, Paris, Les Belles Lettres, 1966, pp. 77-83; E. FANTHAM, “Roman Elegy: Problems of Self-definition, and Redirection”, in *L’histoire littéraire immanente dans la poésie latine – Entretiens sur l’Antiquité classique de la Fondation Hardt*, E. A. ERNST (ed.), Genève, Droz, 2002, pp. 186-189.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. n. 2.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. n. 27.

throughout the stories as an inspiring pattern, links together all the collection and contributes to the creation of an "opus reticulatum"<sup>34</sup>.

We could also suppose that Parthenius wanted to give a "scientific"<sup>35</sup> dimension to his notes to give authenticity to his stories like his predecessors such as Callimachus. But where the latter refers to a divine entity to know the origin of something in a dialogue between the writer and the Muses<sup>36</sup>, Parthenius uses λέγεται or φασί in most of etiological tales, as we seen before. These two verbs indicate that the vignette comes from an unknown source – especially when the author uses them to give different versions of the same story (e.g. EP 11) – and introduce a doubtful effect on the facts related. If an element, whatever its nature (historical, natural, psychological), could be explained in different ways, it seems to bring discredit upon the variants reported as uncertain or interchangeable and any scientific sense is lost. Then, we should search elsewhere to deeply understand the functions of etiology.

If we now concentrate on the different groups of etiology detailed at the beginning of the section 3 (natural elements; civic foundations; local particularities; wars; names of people; psychological disorder) and not on all the etiological stories together, connections appear more clearly. In fact, the elements of a same group are explained by the same *aitia*, which creates an effect of unity in the collection. Thus, the stories relating a metamorphosis to explicate natural elements are based on a violent event: an attempted rape. The heroines, desperate by this horrible crime, invoke the gods to escape from their destiny and they obtain their desire through metamorphosis<sup>37</sup>:

Ἀπόλλωνα δὲ Δάφνη ἐπ' αὐτὴν ἰόντα προΐδομένη μάλα ἔρρωμένως ἔφευγεν.  
ὡς δὲ συνεδιώκετο, παρὰ Διὸς αἰτεῖται ἔξ ἀνθρώπων ἀπαλλαγῆναι· καὶ αὐτὴν  
φασὶ γενέσθαι τὸ δένδρον τὸ ἐπικληθὲν ἀπ' ἐκείνης δάφνην. (PARTH., EP 15, 4)

Daphne, meanwhile, saw Apollo coming after her, and turned and fled with great alacrity. When she was almost on the point of being overtaken, she asked Zeus to be translated from the mortal world. And they say she became the tree named after her, the laurel.

The second type of tales, cities' foundations, recounts the amorous adventures between two young adolescents, relationship forbidden by their parents. In each case, the prohibited union is the triggering element for the creation of a city,

<sup>34</sup> D. VOISIN, op. cit., pp. 46-49.

<sup>35</sup> T. KLEIN, "The Role of Callimachus in the Development of the Concept of the Counter-Genre", *Latomus*, 33, 1974, 217-231.

<sup>36</sup> S. MYERS, op. cit., pp. 67-69.

<sup>37</sup> Parthenius even used the same phrase to name the "metamorphosis": ἔξ ἀνθρώπων ἀπαλλαγῆναι.

an event that represents the expiation of the transgressive love<sup>38</sup>. The three local particularities come from the consequences of the murder (organized in *EP* 7, by chance in *EP* 26 or in war in *EP* 36) of the character who tried to rape his beloved (*EP* 7 and 26):

(4) Ἐπεὶ δὲ ὁ τύραννος τῆς ὥρας ἐγλίχετο τοῦ παιδὸς καὶ οἷός τε ἦν αὐτὸν βίᾳ ἄγεσθαι, δυσανασχετήσας ὁ Ἀντιλέων [...] αὐτὸς δὲ οἴκοθεν ἐξιόντα τὸν τύραννον προσδραμῶν ἀνεΐλεν. (5) καὶ τοῦτο δράσας δρόμῳ ἴετο καὶ διέφυγεν ἄν, εἰ μὴ προβάτοις συνδεδεμένοις ἀμφιπεσῶν ἐχειρώθη· διὸ τῆς πόλεως εἰς τάρχαϊον ἀποκαταστάσης ἀμφοτέροις παρὰ τοῖς Ἡρακλεώταις ἐτέθησαν εἰκόνες χαλκαῖ καὶ νόμος ἐγράφη μηδένα ἐλαύνειν τοῦ λοιποῦ πρόβατα συνδεδεμένα. (ΠΑΡΗΝ., *EP* 7, 4-5)

(4) When the tyrant began to lust after the young man's beauty and was on the point of using force to abduct him, Antileon was outraged. But he himself, when the tyrant was leaving house, rushed up and assassinated him. (5) This done, he fled and would have escaped had he not fallen in with a flock of sheep all tied together and been captured. So once the city had returned to its original constitution the Heracleotes erected bronze statues to both men, and a law was enacted that no one in the future was to drive bound sheep.

The local particularity of tale can instead originate from the murder of the hero who supports the abduction in helping the Trojans who defends Helen's kidnapping. In *EP* 18 and 23, two wars were provoked by the adulterous love of the heroine and seem to condemn her behavior. The note 30 tells the source of the name "Celts" like the illegitimate son of Heracles with Celtine during his return from Erythea. Finally, Parthenius offers a rationalization of Periander's cruelty in describing his incestuous relationship with his mother. Although each story is different from the others, links make a game of allusions between the eleven notes (see Appendix 2 for an outline) and create a strong effect of unity in the collection.

Furthermore, these links make apparent a similar reality in all of the etiological *EP*. Every element explained in the tales is the result of a dysfunctional love (rape, incest, adultery...). This is not really surprising since the entire book is concentrated on the general subject: suffering in love. But an important difference remains with the other stories of the collection: their goal is not to present a love story but to teach the origins of something. Does this mean that the passion is a secondary theme in here? On the contrary – and this is our third hypothesis and the most interesting one – we think that Parthenius played with the etiological framework to highlight the theme of his composition, passion in love. Events or elements as important as the creation of cities, or wars between two states, or

<sup>38</sup> A. ZUCKER, op. cit., p. 259. Furthermore, I have shown that Parthenius did not blame the incestuous relation in itself if some conditions were respected (no violence, no trap, no rape), see M. VANDERSMISSEN, "L'inceste dans les *Métamorphoses* d'Ovide, un thème emprunté à Parthénios de Nicée?" *Latomus*, 71, 2012, 1015-1025.

name of people, etc. are the consequences of an unhealthy love story. In this way, the author's aim is to underline the destructive or creative power of dangerous loves, as in the other stories. We could even say that all the etiological stories, insisting on the work's theme, participate in justifying the choice of Parthenius to concentrate his collection on this subject and the literary interest to treat it.

This is probably a particularity of Parthenius who did not employ "narrative etiology" in the same way as the other writers of his time did. J. Poucet<sup>39</sup> and M. Chassignet<sup>40</sup> concur in claiming that its functions are generally: to explain and to emphasize a fact. But Parthenius used this literary motif to accentuate the impacts of love; he did not underline a fact in itself but its causes and, in this way, he moved the stories' interest, previously focused on the fact, to its *aitia*; and gave the reader a new literary treatment of etiology. This new aspect of etiology also offers an argument in support of the hypothesis that the assertion of humility in the preface depends on the conventions of the genre<sup>41</sup>.

## 5. Conclusions

In conclusion, the study of the "etiology" in Parthenius' *Ἐρωτικά Παθήματα* contributes to our knowledge of this very well-structured book and to our understanding of etiology as a literary theme. We defined a new feature of the work and we can better appreciate how Parthenius designed this collection as a whole. We saw how the author constructs the etiological notes and we noticed that the only elements different from the other stories are the lexical markers even if we found a recurrent structure.

We showed why the Greek author used a really frequent literary motif with a particular treatment: to underline the subject chosen for his collection. In this way, he demonstrates his innovative originality and he enhances the quality of his work. The *Ἐρωτικά Παθήματα* were a perfect context to examine how a Greek writer could reinvent the role of a literary theme. So, he subtly changes one of the main etiologies' traditional functions – a fact's development in explaining its causes – by another one: the development of a cause (in the *EP*, always a passionate love) by an etiological context to draw the reader attention on the subject of the work.

In the studies of Parthenius and his work, one could ask now if the literary pattern of travel or others are also used by the author to enlighten the theme of passions or if it pursues further goals. More generally, etiology in other mythographic works – as Konon's *Narratives* or Pseudo-Apollodorus' *Library* – should be examined and compared to etiology in Parthenius to extend our knowledge about this aspect in this particular kind of works.

<sup>39</sup> J. POU CET, loc. cit., 309.

<sup>40</sup> M. CHASSIGNET, loc. cit., 329.

<sup>41</sup> A. ZUCKER, op. cit., p. 80.

## 6. APPENDICES

## Appendix 1

<b>EP</b>	<b>ETIOLOGY</b>	<b>FACT EXPLAINED</b>	<b>TYPE</b>
1. <i>Lycus</i>			
2. <i>Polymela</i>			
3. <i>Euipe</i>			
4. <i>Oenone</i>			
5. <i>Leucippus</i>	x	Cretinaion's foundation	Local history
6. <i>Pallene</i>			
7. <i>Hipparinus</i>	x	A statue and a law	Local history
8. <i>Herippe</i>			
9. <i>Polycrite</i>			
10. <i>Leucone</i>			
11. <i>Byblis</i>	x	Caunos' foundation	Local history
12. <i>Calchus</i>			
13. <i>Harpalyce</i>	x	Bird-chalcis	Natural
14. <i>Antheus</i>			
15. <i>Daphne</i>	x	Laurel	Natural
16. <i>Laodice</i>			
17. <i>Periander's mother</i>	x	Periander's cruelty	Psychological
18. <i>Neaera</i>	x	Naxos – Miletus' war	Local history
19. <i>Pantrato</i>			
20. <i>Leiro</i>			
21. <i>Peisidice</i>			
22. <i>Nanis</i>			
23. <i>Chilonis</i>	x	Sparta – Epirus' war	Local history
24. <i>Hipparinus</i>			
25. <i>Phayllus</i>			
26. <i>Apriate</i>	x	Tomb	Local history
27. <i>Alcinoe</i>			
28. <i>Cleite</i>			
29. <i>Daphnis</i>			
30. <i>Celtine</i>	x	Celts' name	Local history
31. <i>Thymoetes</i>			
32. <i>Anthippe</i>	x	Cichyrus' foundation	Local history
33. <i>Assaon</i>			
34. <i>Corythus</i>			
35. <i>Eulimene</i>			
36. <i>Arganthone</i>	x	Rhesus' name	Local history

## Appendix 2

<i>EP</i>	TYPE/CATEGORY	CAUSES	COMMON POINT
5. <i>Leucippus</i>	Cities' foundation	Incest: brother – sister	Dysfunctional love
7. <i>Hipparinus</i>	Cities' particularity	Rapist's murder	Dysfunctional love
11. <i>Byblis</i>	Cities' foundation	Incest: brother – sister	Dysfunctional love
13. <i>Harpalyce</i>	Natural	Attempted rape	Dysfunctional love
15. <i>Daphne</i>	Natural	Attempted rape	Dysfunctional love
17. <i>Periander's mother</i>	Psychological	Incest: mother – son	Dysfunctional love
18. <i>Neaera</i>	War	Wife's adultery	Dysfunctional love
23. <i>Chilonis</i>	War	Wife's adultery	Dysfunctional love
26. <i>Apriate</i>	Cities' particularity	Rapist's murder	Dysfunctional love
30. <i>Celtine</i>	People name	Husband's adultery	Dysfunctional love
32. <i>Anthippe</i>	Cities' foundation	Incest: brother – sister	Dysfunctional love
36. <i>Arganthone</i>	River's name	Support of adultery	Dysfunctional love

**ABSTRACT:** Parthenius of Nicaea, a Greek author of the 1st century BCE has been the subject of a recent interest from the Greek literature specialists. Modern researches have demonstrated that his only conserved work, the *Ἐρωτικά Παθήματα*, was not a simple mythographic summary of texts but a complex “note-book”. It collects thirty-six short love-stories dedicated to Cornelius Gallus. Scholars have not yet considered the “etiological dimension” in the stories told by Parthenius. Then, it seems significant to take an interest in this aspect to improve our understanding of this so particular group of texts and more generally of the use of etiology as a literary process.

**KEY WORDS:** Greek Literature; Etiology; Mythography.